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feature

20 Montana Women's Trap League

The First of its Kind

Editor's Page

- 7 3, 2, 1 — RE-LAUNCH!
Re-introducing Brandy Elrod

Events

- 8 ATHLETES WANT TO HAVE FUN TOO
AG&AG Clays Extravaganza
- 12 HELICE WORLDS
Competitors and Best Friends
- 16 ONCE UPON A TIME
A 1st Timer at the NSCA Nationals
- 26 TEXAS LIVESTOCK SHOWS
Not Just for Livestock

Guns

- 38 SYREN'S ELOS N2 ELEVATE COMBO
A Multi-Sport Shotgun for Ladies

Leading Ladies

- 42 1940, INC.
Women Training Women

contents

- 46 IDA BROWN
Athlete Profile

Retail

- 52 IDEAS FOR THE HARD TO BUY FOR PERSON
We All Have at Least One

- 54 HEARING PROTECTION AND YOUNG EARS
The Right Way to Protect Little Ears

Second Amendment News

- 58 CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY BILL 2571
A Direct Attack on Our Way of Life

Training

- 62 HOW TO PICK AN INSTRUCTOR
Tips When Searching for Training
- 66 STRENGTH TRAINING For Shooters
- 70 YOUTH TRAINING
The Non-Traditional Sport

feature

- 32 My Not So Easy Hunting Life

on the cover, this page, page 6
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LAUNCH *New Beginnings, Again*

RE-INTRODUCING BRANDY ELROD
NOW TAKING ON AN EDITOR ROLE

Publisher's Foreword

Thank you all so much for your patience in the publication of this leading shooting sports magazine specifically for women. Along with other obstacles, in the past two years, we have struggled with having the right person with the right passion at the helm. As a part of our re-launch for 2023, we are re-introducing Brandy Elrod, who we believe has more passion in her trigger finger than most of us can claim. We are confident that Brandy is who will take this magazine to the heights we have always envisioned.

Because we have not published in a year, all current subscribers are receiving a complimentary four issues on top of their remaining issues, as we are taking this publication to a quarterly calendar. We're aiming (*see what we did there?*) for quality over quantity and want to focus on filling each year's four issues with more riveting and relevant reviews, news, builds, fashion and lifestyle content than cranking out more issues. Once again, we've appreciated your patience while we've re-built and improved.



Growing up in a rodeo family I never imagined one day my life would revolve around shooting sports. I lived the atypical lifestyle of a country kid, all things outdoors, livestock, hunting, and fishing. One activity that never crossed my mind was shooting sports. Due to a birth injury I was left with 30% mobility of my right arm/shoulder. The life that I have led and the obstacles that I have had to overcome have taught me perseverance, confidence, and most importantly how to be fearless.

Nine years ago my job led me to the shooting sports world by accident. Since then, I have found my passion. I learned how to shoot a shotgun, made the USA Para-Trap team four years in a row, competed in several countries, taught numerous youth and led them to win hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships, cash, and prizes. I taught others with impairments how to shoot, empowered other women in shooting sports, and over the last few years started writing about my experiences and expertise in shooting sports.

Everything that I have been involved in over the last nine years has led me to this point. I started with "*Lady*" as a blogger about women with impairments overcoming obstacles to shoot, hunt, and various other outdoor activities. I soon turned my blogs into articles and now here I am becoming the managing editor of LadyShooter LifeStyles with a team of amazing women. I feel as though "*Lady*" and I were meant to be. We both have overcome so many obstacles through the years. I am passionate about making "*Lady*" the premier magazine for women that provides information that is relatable, inspiring, and helpful. There is no other magazine offered strictly for women with information provided by women to empower other women in shooting sports. I look forward to making LadyShooter LifeStyles your go to magazine in the shooting sports industry. ■

Brandy

ATHLETES WANT TO Have Fun Too

BY BRANDY ELROD

For the last five years every match or tournament I have attended has had a purpose; whether it be to work on mental training, meet a MQS (minimum qualifying score), make a certain team, represent the USA at World Cups or World Championships, earn punches to move up in class, or instruct my students. This time I decided to attend an event strictly for fun. That event was the third annual A Girl and A Gun Women's Clays Extravaganza in Lenexa, Kansas at Powder Creek Shooting Park. A Girl and A Gun is most notably known for self-defense, pistol, rifle, and 3-Gun/tactical shotgun training, however once a year, ladies come from all over the United States to attend the Clays Extravaganza at Powder Creek.

I loaded up my SUV with two of my students and we headed nine and a half hours north where we also added my dear friend Gayla, who flew in for our adventure. We had no idea what we were getting into as we are all athletes that perceive shooting as our sport and not our hobby. I will openly admit; I was very apprehensive upon arrival that we had made a mistake and that everything would be very elementary for us.

I chose not to do the instruction. My philosophy on shotgun instruction is, if it is not broken, do not fix it. I am very fortunate to have two great coaches who understand me, my limitations, and I only use them. However, Gayla chose to participate in the instruction after hearing from others about everything they learned. The instruction and targets were geared more towards beginning shooters, though the instructor that Gayla was learning from did listen to the ladies and moved them to more challenging targets on the 5-stand fields. After speaking with all the ladies, the instructors were very insightful, as well as perfectly suited to handle the different levels of shooting abilities.

Not only does the Clays Extravaganza start with instruction but there are also workshops

throughout each day. They are very informal with the women sitting around on the porch of Powder Creek listening to the experts on all things shotgun. What I loved about this was that everyone was able to provide information to each other, as well as allowing for the "newbies" to not be intimidated by the "seasoned" shooters. I did attend the workshop on lenses as I am always looking for ways to explain lens colors to my students. Sharon Belt was very informative in this topic. She kept her information very simple while explaining prescription options to some newer shooters, providing information that I can pass

onto my younger students. As an athlete who competes and does not just instruct, I sometimes get complacent and provide way too much information to my students. It was very refreshing to listen to someone that explained the complexity of shooting glasses in a very simple manner. As women, we tend to overthink everything, so simplicity is sometimes easier when you are first starting a new adventure. The names of the workshops were catchy as well. My sometimes immature brain did chuckle a little at the name of the chokes workshop..." chokes and loads." When you are always around high school students,





sometimes your immaturity is on full display, and the name of that workshop was very impressive.

After speaking with some of the ladies on the instruction day and listening to the types of

targets they were receiving instruction on, I really thought the entire tournament was going to be “fluff.” I was pleasantly surprised. Being an international trap athlete, I only shoot Sporting

Clays or 5-Stand when I am working on mental training and tournament readiness. I most certainly never shoot American Trap since there are no tournaments in my area. I started the tournament with American Trap, which does bring out the worst in me. I swear, that discipline will make a nun curse. My mental game goes to mush, I overthink every target, and I shoot past the targets. I decided to turn on my fun brain and whatever my score was, I would not let it affect the rest of my time in Kansas. The targets were thrown, and I laughed quite a bit on the line at myself. I can honestly say for once I was having fun shooting American trap, especially with the camaraderie from the ladies I was on the line with. There were two sporting clays courses, one 75 target course that provided more fluff targets, and a 100 target NSCA course that combined with the hilly and valley terrain, providing a challenge even for the Master class sporting clays athlete. Of all the disciplines we competed in, my favorite was the dual 5-Stand fields. Not only did the 5-Stand fields have eight trap machines, I can barely remember six, there were trees, bush piles, screaming tower targets, and terrain changes. I have never had such an adrenaline rush shooting 5-Stand as I did at the Clays Extravaganza. I was thoroughly impressed by the combination of the different target presentations and we were not just provided “fluff” because the competition was only for women.

My apprehensions when first arriving in Kansas quickly diminished after meeting all the



ladies and competing. The ladies ranged in age from 15 to 71, coming from 16 different states. There were NSCA E Class to Master class participants, but the common ground we all had was, ladies truly just want to have fun. If you are looking for an event where you can shoot multiple disciplines, meet women from all over the United States, and simply have fun, then the A Girl & A Gun Women's Clays Extravaganza is for you. The 2023 event will be in July at Defender Outdoors Sporting Clays Ranch in Ft. Worth, Texas. In 2023 instead of dunking CZ Pro-staff member Dave Miller in the dunk tank, Travis Mears will show everyone his awesome trick shots. ■





Macie

HELICE: The Fiercest Competitors...



Lindsey

...and the Best of Friends

AN INTERVIEW WITH **LINDSEY STACHURSKI** AND **MACIE PAGE**
BY **MIMI WILFONG**

As any world-level athlete will attest, it takes a significant amount of time, effort, and extreme dedication to be the best in the world. Many of these same athletes, as their career slows down and they have time to reflect, talk about how lonely it can be as a champion, because the time it takes to maintain that position means they aren't able to spend as much time with their friends and families as they would have liked.

There's an exception to every rule, though, right? In the game of helice, that exception is with Macie Page and Lindsey Stachurski, helice powerhouses that are recognized across the world, and very close friends. In 2022, Macie and Lindsey both qualified (again) for the US Helice Team, and they traveled to Sicily for the FITASC World Helice Championship. At the end of the event, Macie and Lindsey were tied with a score of 25/30, the top score posted by ladies, and it meant they would shoot off – against each other – for the gold and silver medals. When the dust settled, Lindsey scored a 6 in the shoot off, and Macie scored a 5, placing them atop a podium and recognizing them as the two best shooters in the World.

Macie and Lindsey, both from Texas, but Macie near Dallas and Lindsey near Houston, have the type of friendship that most people only aspire to on social media. They are as much family as friends, and they are each other's biggest fan. Their thoughtfulness and kindness towards each other, the way they cheer each other on, and the way they represent the game of helice with such poise and grace is truly one-of-a-kind. I had the chance to get to know Macie and Lindsey a little better, and was delighted to learn more about their lives, their experiences, and how they've achieved their goals in the game of helice.

Tell me a little bit about yourself?

■ **Macie:** I am a senior this year at Liberty Christian school. I have not decided yet where I am going to college but have narrowed down my

options so far. My family and I are very close, and they are by far my biggest supporters. I have one sister Morgan, who is six years older than me.

■ **Lindsey:** I am a stay-at-home wife to my husband Tony, and mom to my amazing two-and-a-half-year-old son, Tripp, and three golden retrievers.

When and how did you get started shooting?

■ **Macie:** When I was three years old, I would go out and pull targets for my dad while he shot sporting clays. My dad always said I would always ask him when I could start shooting. When I was around nine, I would shoot occasionally, but I always loved going. I started to love shooting and began competing at twelve. I competed in SCTP shooting trap, skeet, and sporting clays and NSCA. I was around 14 when I began shooting helice.

■ **Lindsey:** I started shooting casually at 16. I didn't start entering competitions until my 20s. My grandfather bought me my first shotgun and would shoot sporting clays with me on occasion. That was the start of my newfound passion.

Let's talk more specifically about helice. How did you get started shooting helice?

■ **Macie:** Dallas Gun Club is the only gun club near us that has helice. When we became members, I tried helice for the first time. I was already competing in NSCA and SCTP, but helice quickly became my favorite. It did not take long before I began to shoot helice as my main form of competition.

■ **Lindsey:** Helice began for me about three years ago. It was something new and challenging. I enjoyed the people and the cadence of the game. After shooting it a few times, I was hooked.





What is it about helice that initially intrigued you? Why did you decide to become competitive in it?

■ **Macie:** It initially intrigued me because it was different every time. I instantly thought this was the most fun discipline to shoot. Quickly after starting to shoot helice, I knew I wanted to start competing in it because it is so captivating. The helice community is so incredibly welcoming and supportive that it only made my choice easier. I have met some of the best people through shooting helice.



■ **Lindsey:** The unpredictability of what the next target will look like and the luck of the draw. The draw you get could be great targets or all difficult and it's different for everyone. It levels the playing field a bit. It's a great community of people all excited to be doing the same thing you are.

You're both incredible helice shooters, recognized on the national and world stage. How did you become so good at helice?

■ **Macie:** Over the past two summers I started to practice several times a week. I will also practice a lot during the school year as well. Many of the top helice shooters are so encouraging and always willing to give pointers. I think that the tips and practice I do every week has helped me tremendously in building my skill and confidence in the game. My dad has also been my coach



since I began shooting, he is the one who I look to with anything shooting related.

■ **Lindsey:** My success with helice comes from a few things. I think one of the bigger reasons for me personally is who you shoot with. Shooting with people that you can learn from and watch. Shooters who will stand behind you and tell you what you did wrong and push you to do better. Another is shooting tough rings. Seeing lots of fast, on-edge targets regularly and getting to practice those shots. Lastly, some ability with a lot of luck.

Tell me about what equipment you use?

■ **Macie:** For my gun, I use a Zoli Bella, which is Zoli's ladies model gun with smoke chokes. For my ammo, I use the B&P F2 Mach 1 oz. 1250 fps 7.5 shell. These shells have been the best for me for shooting helice because they consistently

pattern the best. For glasses, I use the Outlaw Pillas.

■ **Lindsey:** I shoot a Krieghoff K-80 Vintage Scroll 32in Parcours, ported barrel with Briley chokes. My ammo is Winchester AAs 1290 FPS. I shoot in my Pilla Outlaw 6x.

What was your goal in 2022? And how did you go about working towards that goal?

■ **Macie:** In 2022, I had a variety of small goals I wanted to accomplish along with being able to go to the World Championship. I had several other smaller goals I wanted to achieve before I began to make much bigger goals for myself. As the time got closer to Nationals, I really wanted to win the ladies National Helice Championship this year for the second year in a row. One of my smaller goals last year was to try and calm my nerves before a shoot, or just not be as nervous

when shooting. The past year, I was extremely nervous anytime I was in a competition, no matter the gravity of the competition. I think towards the end of the year, I definitely noticed a difference in how nervous I would get. Actively telling myself there was no reason to be nervous really helped. Another thing that helped was talking to my dad before I shot about how nervous I was. My dad would always tell that it did not matter if I did poorly that day. He told me to just go have fun and there was not a reason to be nervous. I think that helped too.

■ **Lindsey:** I have set goals that I'm still working toward. Then I have my weekly goals that change depending on how my shooting is going at the time. My latest goal when practicing is to just keep my percentage of second barrel use low.

Now, tell me about qualifying to make the US helice team. Both of you have qualified



for the team before, but this year was the first year you went to the World Championship. What drove that?

■ **Macie:** I knew this year we would most likely be able to go because this would be the first year COVID would likely not affect the ability to be able to travel to the World Championship. With that in mind, I knew how badly I wanted to go. I was very excited to be able to represent team USA at the world championship.

■ **Lindsey:** I wanted to shoot my best and found a lot of determination along the way. I was focused and kept to what I've learned in the last year and was fortunate enough to make it all come together at the right time.

How was the World Championship?

■ **Macie:** The World Championship was unlike any other shoot I had ever shot before. That was the biggest helice shoot I had ever been to and the farthest from home as well. It was very different from shooting at home. At home, most of the people I shoot with, I know or have shot with before. At the World Championship, I did not know most of the people I shot with. I loved the World Championship; I thought it was very fun to be able to compete at that level and in such a cool location. I loved being able to shoot every day, then be on the beach by the afternoon. I thought that the targets were by far some of the most challenging helice targets I had ever shot before. This made it very exciting to compete.

■ **Lindsey:** Worlds was an amazing experience for many reasons. It came with a lot of new

challenges I hadn't faced in shooting before. Plenty of learning curves, but a lot of funny stories to go with them. The people we met, and the time spent with everyone on team USA was priceless.

Talk about your friendship. How did you guys become friends? What's the magic behind how and why you guys are good friends?

■ **Macie:** Lindsey and I became friends around a year ago this time but, our friendship feels like Lindsey and her family have been a part of my family for much longer. We both had shot helice for around two years together but were not really friends yet at that time. Lindsey and I really became friends after her and my mom became



friends. Their family started to always camp with our family beginning last February, which really brought us together at the shoots. Lindsey felt like one of my own friends rather than just a friend of my mom's. I also would always tell Lindsey I would watch her son, Tripp, for her at all the shoots after that. I love Lindsey and her family as they are my own family. I think part of the reason she and I are such good friends is because we talk every day in some fashion. I even got Lindsey to download Snapchat so at the minimum, we Snapchat every day. Lindsey pretty much gets updates every day on my life and vice versa. I am so thankful for this sport bringing us as such good friends together.

■ **Lindsey:** Macie and I became good friends about a year ago. It feels like so much longer. My husband and I bought a travel trailer to go to the shoots, and that led to us planning trips with one another. It's become a cool family thing we do with the Pages. It led to some family vacations outside of shooting as well. We just became the best of friends overnight. Not a day goes by that Macie and I don't talk at some point. ■



Once Upon a Time

BY CHERYL GAY

Once upon a time...just kidding. I do feel like I am living a fairytale sometimes. I am blessed to be able to travel with my husband to shooting clubs all over the United States. I have been to the World FITASC at Northbrook and The Grand American Trap Shoot twice in Illinois, Nationals, Regionals, the US Open and other major shoots in states such as New Jersey, Kansas, South Carolina, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin to name a few. Most recently I was privileged to be able to travel along with my husband while he covered the NSCA Nationals in San Antonio, Texas. I watched him work talking with so many different people from vendors and shooters, to the guys and girls who set targets and make it all happen. I enjoy watching him work in this capacity doing something he loves, writing about a sport he is passionate about. I am always a spectator and sometimes camera girl on these trips, but that changed at Nationals this year.

My experience at Nationals was different from any other shoot I have been to. I was a little more involved with “networking” and getting to know people from companies such as Zoli, Cesar Guerini, Winchester, Barepelt and so may more. I felt more a part of the sport shooting world than any other trip. I made new friends and was able to get to know some better. It was wonderful. I stood quietly by sometimes and just

absorbed the information that the people from these companies would share about their experiences and the products and brands they represent and feel so passionate about.

October is breast cancer awareness month as we all know and there was a special day dedicated to acknowledging and supporting the cause. Pink Out Day was amazing with so many shooters, spectators and vendors sporting their pink shirts and hats. The drinks were served in hot pink cups and there was a raffle for a beautiful custom breast cancer awareness shotgun donated by Cole’s. Sadly, I did not win the gun, but I did get a new hat and shirt that say, “Every Pair Matters,” big and bold on the front.

The weather in Texas was confusing for a Michigan girl like me. I was really expecting it to be much warmer and had packed all kinds of summer outfits. Luckily, I am a woman who likes to be





prepared so I also had a mix of fall clothes just in case. Good thing I did because not once did I wear a pair of shorts the entire time we were there. The cooler weather in the evening hours also gave me a good excuse to buy a sweatshirt or two. The weather was perfect, even though I wasn't expecting the cooler temps, with the sun coming out every day giving warmth and vitamin D, and nice cool weather in the evening. It could not have been a better week of weather in my opinion.

Along with some clothing items from different gun manufacturers (I don't show favoritism), there was a variety of other vendors selling their wares to make a girl want to ask for the credit card. A company called Shooter Girl Jewelry, ironically from my home state of Michigan, was one of the vendors and they have pretty much any kind of jewelry item you could want. Necklaces, bracelets, rings, cuff links, key chains, you name it they probably have it and if not, they were probably be able to make it for you special. I left there with a few items that I just had to have since I am slightly spoiled and a fairytale princess to boot.

Shopping, eating and socializing are all things I am very good at when I go to events like this, but this trip to Nationals was different in another huge way, I actually shot an event. For anyone who knows me, this is quite out of character. Typically, when someone asks me if I shoot, I

have to answer with "not very much" "I am still trying to find the right gun for me" or something along those lines. My prince of a husband convinced me to demo a gun while we were at

The Grand last year, and I fell in love with it. He was able to make adjustments and the gun fit me beautifully, so he ordered one for me. It had not arrived by the time we went to Nationals, and to



be honest I wouldn't have taken it even if it had. I never plan on participating in a shoot that we attend outside our home club. To my surprise a friend asked me to shoot the lady's event with another friend I have made from Ohio. I was very hesitant to do it and agreed, but only if I was able to hop on their squad. I couldn't. Their squad was already full, and registration could not add me. I thought I was safe; I was wrong. Another friend who I was getting to know a lot better during this trip said she was also shooting the event and there should be room on her squad. My next great reason for not shooting at this National event with women who do this all the time is that I had no gun. Wrong again. It just so happened that the manufacturer of the gun I bought, had the identical model on hand, set it up for me and allowed me to use it for this event. All out of excuses, off I went to shoot my very first registered target event.

The lady's tournament was a friendly 50 bird course made for shooters of all levels, but I was still terrified that I would embarrass myself, and just by association my sweet husband. The feeling of calling "pull" and then pulling the trigger at that first bird was overwhelming for a moment. I missed the target and felt like I was going to have a panic attack any second when another shooter on our squad said from behind me, "no one is



getting paid to be here, just breathe and have fun". I will never forget the exhilaration I felt when I finally broke a target at that first station. My squad mates continued to give me words of encouragement and even some coaching without making me feel liking I was not good enough to be there. While at that first station, after breaking my first target, I made myself a goal to hit at least one target at every station. I must be honest here; I have no idea what my score was out of 50 birds. What I do know is that I did break at least one target at every station and sometimes more than one. It was an amazing experience, and I am

forever thankful that those wonderful ladies encouraged me to shoot this event. Their willingness to take me on as an apprentice, made me feel so supported and a part of it, not just a spectator this time.

NSCA Nationals will be my favorite, and perhaps the most special shoot that I have and may ever go to. I never imagined that this fair weather only, mostly trap shooting girl would ever be shooting any registered sporting targets. I am beyond happy that I did. Thank you to the beautiful woman who encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone and try something scary. ■



NEW WOMEN'S LEAGUE



FIRST OF *IN* *HISTORY*
ITS KIND

BY RAYELYNN BRANDL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS HOLGUIN



Matilda Newton

A LOT OF FIRSTS AND A SHOOT-OFF

In truth, this is the first fun shoot and competition for most of the women shooting here. During the opening ceremony it was shared that women who had shot a 24.5 average were present as well as those that shot a single digit average (these averages based on 25 birds). The goal of the day was fun, inspiration and no judgement. Women in attendance represented ages from Libby shooter, Matilda Newton, 12 years old, to 70 plus.

The first shots fired at the event are to determine the winner of Class A. Most of the women attending have never witnessed, let alone participated in a shoot-off, so the crowd is curious and shares the nervous energy of the two shooters. Tracy Kienitz, Kalispell Club Captain, organizes the score-keeping and referee, gives directions to the shooters, and turns to address the crowd. “Thank you to our shooters, Sherry Stearns and Tressa Doughty. I know that many of you have never seen a shoot off before, so we thought this would be a great start to our event. It gives us the opportunity to demonstrate what is possible. Both these women are incredible shooters, as evidenced by their score of 196 out of 200. I want you to know that both these women have worked hard and put in the practice to stand on this line today. Like many of you, they also started out breaking just a few targets out of 25, now they are breaking 100 straights!”

Sherry Stearns and Tressa Doughty



On an early September morning in Kalispell, MT, 70 women from across the state gathered for the first annual Montana State Women’s Trap League Fun Shoot at the home of Xcel Shooting Sports and Passionate Outlaws. The event was the culmination of a summer spent shooting trap league at one’s local club, and an opportunity to connect with the other women league shooters from across the state. Laughter rang out as the women picked a colored shotgun shell, the trapshooting version of a sorting hat, to determine the mix up of squads and shooting order. Overheard at the registration table were comments like, “Oh. So, we aren’t just shooting with our team?” Erin, a member of the Kalispell team, sponsor and a volunteer for the day smiled and explained that squads were being formed via shotgun shell sorting in order to ensure that women are able to meet and get to know one another. Amy Washtak, a new shooter from Three Forks, Montana laughed out loud exclaiming, “I suppose that is good. I just hope I don’t embarrass myself. I am brand new to this whole thing. I have never competed and its nerve racking enough to shoot on league nights.” Words of encouragement ring from several women surrounding her: “We are all in the same boat. This is my first time too. This is just for fun. No pressure. You will do awesome.”



Opening Ceremony

are now participating in the sport throughout the country, the sport remains dominated by men. As a reference, there were 79 women who registered (shot ATA) targets in the state of Montana in 2022. In a triumph for youth shooting, many of the women who did register targets in 2022 were enrolled through the youth shooting sports program AIM. That program, like the women’s league, is hosted by clubs throughout the state in an effort to encourage new shooters to enter the sport.

Annette Reinhart, an experienced ATA shooter described her first experiences shooting in competition. “There were no women shooters. I was the only one and I shot with my brother, who made sure that I was comfortable and not taking any grief from the guys. It was hard sometimes because you compare yourself to the guys and think I am not any good at this, so I think leagues like this are important to help women learn and feel comfortable. I love the camaraderie and encouragement too!”





TRIUMPH, CONFIDENCE AND A FLURRY

Stories of moral victories spread throughout the day as the shooters got to know each other and shared their league experiences. Women reflected that their goal to break five out of five on one post was achieved or breaking into the double-digits was an accomplishment. Many women related that this year was their first experience with shouldering a shotgun and that alone was empowering. Still, others related that they finally felt a sense of belonging and that they felt comfortable coming to the club without their male counterpart, that finally their home club was truly their own.

As the day progressed these women shot a variety of different shooting games paired with women from other clubs. Some that had been nervous about participating in the day’s events walked away with smiles on their faces as they won a game...confidence gained. Inspiration evident.

To finish out the day, Tracy challenged the shooters to participate in a team flurry competition, the beginning of an annual tradition. Each club selected three members to shoot a round of flurry, which is 25 rapid-paced targets thrown without notice. Each team of three shooters takes aim and attempts to break as many targets as possible during the flurry. The most

often discussed strategy was “Don’t think, just Shoot.” Laughter abounded as teams took the line and suddenly the goal to bring home the trophy inspired mild cajoling between teams. The Kalispell team captured the trophy, which will stay on site at Tracy’s shop. The competition between the clubs is now on, and many teams left the line discussing how to practice flurry at home in order to be ready for next year.

SISTERHOOD

A statewide league takes effort and many helping hands, including local team captains, numerous sponsors, a clear mission and a leader. Tracy Kienitz is the owner of Passionate Outlaws. Her vision, creativity and energy fueled the entire project. She holds herself like a mama bear, protective, encouraging, fiercely determined, and proud. The day of the shoot she was filled with joy, but also on high alert, making sure that all things run smoothly and that her dream for an entire day dedicated to women shooters is inspiring for all participants. When asked why she started the league, why invest energy, money and time in such an event, Tracy commented, “I am simply passionate about women and shooting sports. I love selling women proper equipment, so they don’t get beat up by their shotgun, and they have the right tools to improve their performance. But my biggest joy is watching the women go from being nervous about a shotgun, to smiling when they hit their first target or run their first 25 straight. I simply love the tribe of shotgun sisters and will donate as much time, energy and resources possible to help as many women succeed and find joy while shooting.”

Tracy’s passion shows up loud and clear in the stated mission of the Montana State Women’s League. The mission declares; “to create a community of women who support, encourage, and inspire each other while taking part in the shooting sports. We accomplish this mission by collaborating with trap clubs across the State of Montana to support and implement Women’s Shooting Leagues.” Indeed, those who participated in the first year of this league would check the box as “mission accomplished.”

Leadership comes in many forms and the captains at each club helped to recruit shooters, navigate scoring, and ensure inclusion. Tracy doesn’t take all the credit for the league and openly shares that its success lies with the amazing club captains who helped launch this league; Sherry Stearns, Kashia Herring,



Rayelynn Brandl, Dorian Boling, Emi Smith, and Janice Petritz. Tracy also managed the Kalispell team. Many of the club captains implemented theme nights, potlucks and really did a great job creating a fun atmosphere for a girl’s night out.

LOTS OF SUPPORT FOR THE LADIES

Thanks to more than 30 sponsors, the shooters were fed, their ammo was paid for along with clays, and several thousands of dollars in prizes were given away. Many of the sponsors were business owners but several were individuals who donated straight from the heart at the opportunity to support this league.

Montana Silversmith buckles were awarded to the league’s class winners:

SHOOTER CLASS	NAME	HOME CLUB	SCORE
CLASS A	Tressa Doughty	Great Falls	196x200
CLASS B	Boo Leveque	Great Falls	138x200
CLASS C	Brooklyn Lorenz	Great Falls	113x200
CLASS D	Celia Ison	Helena	118x200
NEW SHOOTER	Jenna Reitz	Helena	152x200
JUNIOR	Savannah Lucas	Libby	162x200

“I love being the captain for our club because I get to help new shooters and those ladies that are struggling. Seeing joy in their eyes when they shoot well makes all the effort worth it!”
— Sherry Stearns, Great Falls Club Captain

Helena Team



Great Falls Theme Night



Many other women won cash prizes for hitting 25 straights and other league challenges. When the day came to an end, the Montana State Women’s Trap League Facebook page had immediate posts from excited attendees, club captains’ phones blew up with excitement, sponsors immediately recommitted for next year’s opportunity to sponsor. As this article was being written, club captains have reported receiving numerous inquiries asking for information to join their leagues, new clubs are asking to get involved next year and even out of state inquiries have come in asking how to start such a league. To find out more about the league and/or find a host club in Montana, become a club captain and join the Montana State Women’s Trap League, start a league in your state, or sponsor this league please contact Tracy Kientz by visiting womenshootingsports.com ■

Texas Major Livestock Shows...



NOT JUST FOR COWS, SOWS, AND PLOWS
SAYS **BRANDY ELROD**

Any Texan will tell you everything is bigger and better in Texas and that definitely holds true for their livestock shows. You may be thinking, what does a livestock show have to do with shotgun sports? In Texas, the major livestock shows are not just about showing lambs, goats, and cattle, they also include shooting sports. Texas has eight major livestock shows across the state, of which five of these shows include shotgun tournaments as part of their events. The season starts with the Heart of Texas Fair (HOT Fair) in Waco which occurs during October, as well as the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo (FWSSR). The next stop is Rodeo Houston (HLSR) and then the San Antonio Stock Show (SALE) in February.

Each of the stock shows has their own individual requirements for youth to enter, but all of them have the following minimum criteria:

- Must be a member of a Texas 4-H or FFA.
- Must reside in the state of Texas.
- Must have participated in one Major Show Qualifier prior to the entry deadline.
- Must be between the ages of nine and 18 as of, or on August 31st, or the age of eight in the third grade.

FORT WORTH

The Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo debuted their tournament in October of 2022 at Defender Outdoors, in Fort Worth with sporting clays. FWSSR holds a two-day tournament. The first day is for practice and side events. The second day is for 4-H & FFA members giving away \$20,000 in premiums, where participants shoot a 100-target preliminary and then shoot a 100-target final. Another avenue to win scholarships with the FWSSR is the AIM for

Education scholarship event where high school seniors completed a test on Texas Hunter's Education, as well as Texas shooting sports. Then the top 10 scoring students give a presentation about Hunter's Safety and Texas shooting sports to a panel of judges.

SAN ANTONIO

The two largest in attendance and prizes are Rodeo Houston and San Antonio Stock Show. The SALE Junior Shootout started the legacy of Major Show shooting sports in 2013 with 340 athletes. Since this time, the SALE Junior Shootout has grown to 1057 athletes coming from 108 counties across the state of Texas. The stock show has also given millions of dollars in scholarships and prizes throughout the 11 years of the tournament's history. The SALE Junior Shootout takes place at the National Shooting

Complex on the outskirts of San Antonio which boasts 696 acres of shooting heaven and can host a tournament of this size. Texas youth spend up to four days shooting three main scholarship events as well as various other games throughout the tournament. Youth athletes can win a \$10,000 scholarship in American Trap, Doubles Trap (which in 2023 replaced Modified Trap), and Sporting Clays. This year male and female athletes for FFA and 4-H were able to win these scholarships in the three respective shooting events. Other events in which the athletes can test their skills and win prizes are Super Sporting, and always a fan favorite Make-A-Break.

The SALE Junior Shootout never disappoints in keeping everyone occupied during their time on the grounds. There are always vendors open including Coles Gunsmithing, Blaser, Rhino Chokes, Trainer Hale, and Soundguard to name a few. Educational classes with a variety of





information including professional athletes such as Cory Kruse and Haley Dunn, along with instructors including Gil and Vikki Ash, occur every hour. By attending these classes, a participant can earn tickets for the various nightly drawings which include rifles, shotguns, and a plethora of shooting enthusiast’s gear. At night athletes and their parents can partake in fun shows with trick shooting from Travis Mears, the Make-A-Break finals, as well as the Blaser and Zoli shoot-offs. The Blaser and Zoli shoot-offs are a great opportunity for the athletes to win the respective brand guns if their number (between 1 and 100), that is randomly drawn from a bucket is called. All the athletes that have the drawn number, if they shot that number in a scholarship event, get the chance to shoot for a Zoli or Blaser under the lights. The last three athletes standing win guns, with first place winning a Zoli or Blaser shotgun.

The SALE Junior Shootout also tops the Major Stock Show tournaments in terms of prizes awarded. Sporting Clays and Modified Trap each award twenty-two buckles as well as prize packages along with four \$10,000 scholarships in each event. American Trap

provides the largest opportunity to win a buckle, by awarding 52 buckles with prize packages and four \$10,000 scholarships. Each prize package averages \$750-\$1000 and can include gift certificates, ammo, chokes, shooting glasses, and firearms.

HOUSTON

Rodeo Houston takes a different approach to their shotgun tournament. I would compare Rodeo Houston to a high-end charity tournament in terms of hospitality to the athletes, range used, and management. Rodeo Houston Young Guns started in 2014 with 278 athletes at American Shooting Centers in Katy. After a few years the tournament was moved to Greater Houston Gun Club and has now grown to 500 athletes in Sporting Clays and 400 athletes in American Skeet. Rodeo Houston does cap the number of athletes in order to keep the tournament limited to two days. Rodeo Houston wins the award for hospitality by providing sit-down meals for their athletes and parents as well as an awards banquet for the winning athletes. The facilities are top notch as the event is hosted

by Greater Houston Gun Club. Each squad of athletes is paired with a Rodeo Houston Wildlife Committee member that travels from station to station with the athletes, basically acting as their own personal caddy/cheerleader. Another difference for Rodeo Houston Young Guns is the format of the tournament. Rodeo Houston separates the males and females, and places them all on different courses. They only take the top 10 male and female athletes for each age group to the finals. San Antonio squads all ages and genders on the same courses as well as taking the top 70 athletes (or more depending on the number needed to meet all the prize spots) from each course to the finals. Additionally, Rodeo Houston offers American Skeet as one of their events.

In terms of prizes, Rodeo Houston does a great job and has definitely upped the ante over the years. Each athlete that makes the finals in sporting clays is guaranteed money, a buckle, and a prize package. The Ranching and Wildlife Committee award up to \$37,000 to the sporting clays and skeet athletes based on a Lewis class system payout for each age group and each gender.



The SALE Junior Shootout and Rodeo Houston Young Guns have provided an avenue for many athletes to compete over the last ten years. The impact the two tournaments have left on the athletes both financially and in terms of the firearms they have won, is the most important aspect of the tournaments.

FOUR SUCCESS STORIES

Ryann Phillips, a former Bordon County 4-H'er has competed at San Antonio for six years. During this time, she has won two, \$10,000 scholarships, two Blaser F16 shotguns, and numerous other prizes. Ryann attributes San Antonio to opening the doors to a world she would have never considered competing in, Olympic trap. This is owed totally in fact to the event Modified trap. Ryann is the current USA Shooting Junior Female gold medalist and is also on the Women’s National World Cup team. All of Ryann’s success has been realized shooting the Blaser F16 she won at the San Antonio Junior Shootout.

Hunter Martinez, an 11th grader from Hidalgo County 4-H won a Blaser F3 shotgun during the Blaser shoot-off. He stated that he loves shooting at SALE because you are shooting on a very high level and there is so much pressure due to the caliber of athletes. He said SALE has increased his confidence as a shooter and thus it paid off under the lights when he won his Blaser F3.



Rodeo Houston has changed the lives of many athletes as well. Micaela Valesquez, a 9th grader from Taylor County 4-H, has been competing for five years. During this time, she has competed at Rodeo Houston three times, placing in both American Skeet and Sporting Clays. She said that making the finals in Sporting Clays is very intense due to the level of the competition, which has helped her build confidence and become a better shooter. The increase in confidence competing at such a high caliber tournament has helped her win the Make-A-Break finals at San Antonio Junior Shootout where she competed in front of 1,000’s of people under the lights.

Lane Picklo, an 11th grader from Austin County, embarked on a unique approach to all of

his award money that he has won the last three years in American Skeet and Sporting Clays from Rodeo Houston. Lane used the \$5,000 to open his own laser engraving business called Republic Designs. Add entrepreneurship to the list of benefits from these events.

NOT JUST FOR LIVESTOCK

The major livestock shows of Texas are not just about cows, sows, and plows. They are not only changing the lives of the students that raise animals throughout the state of Texas, but they are also opening doors of opportunity to thousands of youth shooting athletes each year. The stock shows provide an opportunity for scholarships and prizes that are life changing to

these athletes. The major stock show tournaments have built confidence, allowed athletes to become entrepreneurs by opening businesses and even making National shooting teams due to the firearms they have won and the lessons they have learned. If you have a youth shooting athlete in your household and are considering entering them into a Major Livestock Show tournament, the memories and camaraderie are worth the time and sacrifices made to attend. ■



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My Not so Easy Hunting Life

PROFILES IN
PERSEVERANCE
BY BRANDY ELROD

Currently in the United States there are 15.2 million hunting license holders with the average hunter being a white male. Of the 15.2 million hunters, women make up a mere 1.1 million hunters in the US. Amongst female hunters there is an even smaller group of hunters that have varying physical challenges that they do not let affect their ability to hunt. Analiese, Becky, and Rachel are the epitome of partaking in a not so easy hunting life, but they persevere to enjoy what they love.

THE BEAUTY QUEEN

Analiese is a 20-year-old college student from Central Louisiana. Analiese was born with Spina Bifida, a birth defect that occurs when the spine and spinal cord do not form properly. Analiese uses a walker to move short distances and a wheelchair for long distances and she does not let this stop her. She currently manages a ranch and horse boarding facility and is a Rodeo Queen. Her outdoor hobbies include: riding horses, fishing, four wheeling, kayaking, being on the water and most recently hunting.

As you can imagine, using a wheelchair or walker can make any hunting experience very difficult. Walking through brush and packing out game is not an option, so Analiese relies on easy to access stands and a lot of assistance from guides and her wonderful traveling partner, her mother. Due to numerous surgeries Analiese's hands shake so she uses tripods or stands for her rifle. Analiese comes from a single parent home, so without a male figure in her life she has had to rely on friends and organizations for disabled hunters. Analiese grew up in a community where hunting was common, but she didn't get started until she was a senior in High School and was offered an opportunity by her principal.

Analiese has mobility issues, so she struggles with finding accessible stands and areas to hunt and she is very unsteady, so she requires stands for her rifle and different accommodations. To help with the accommodations, she needs, Analiese hunts with various organizations that specialize in helping hunters with physical disabilities. Analiese has hunted with the Wyoming Disabled Hunters, National Wild Turkey Federation Wheeling Sportsman, Hands of a Sportsman with BRM Wild Adventures, Able Outdoors, and the Hunters Enriching Lives of People (H.E.L.P) organizations. When I asked Analiese what she wanted the world to know about hunting as a disabled person she stated, "I want the world to realize the dedication it takes in both the hunter and the organizations that help. I'd also like people to understand that these challenges that we face are sometimes the best things to build character because they can make or break you as a hunter."



THE PARA-ATHLETE

Becky Noble is an outdoors woman, she hunts, she fishes, she participates in shooting sports, her career is even centered around the outdoors working for Cabelas. In 1996 Becky lost the use of her legs due to a car accident thus landing her in a wheelchair. Becky grew up on a dairy farm in Minnesota and did not start competing in shotgun events until after she had her accident in 2009. In 2014, Becky began to compete competitively in American trap. After competing for a few years in American trap, Becky learned about Olympic Para-trap and decided to attend a qualifying match in Kerrville, Texas in February of 2018 where she met her qualifying score to make the USA team and travel to Lonato, Italy. In 2019 Becky received the bronze medal at the USA Para-Nationals. Becky has also made the All-American team in American Trap in the chair shooter category in 2019 and 2020. Becky is the reigning para-trap chair female World champion.

Becky has been hunting most all her life. She enjoyed deer hunting with her dad and brothers. At 12 years old she completed hunter safety and got her first deer license. Growing up in Southeastern Minnesota she was only allowed to use shotguns with slugs for hunting deer. The power behind a shotgun is intense, loud, and exhilarating, she stated. She loved it! A shot would ring out on opening morning, and she could feel the adrenaline pumping through her body. She would sit in her stand until about 9:30-



10:00 pm, or until she couldn't feel her feet and needed to move around. The afternoons were spent driving through the countryside and walking thickets or cornfields. She would meet up with other hunting parties to see their successes or plan to push a chunk of land. Deer hunting is all she did as a child, it wasn't until she started working at Cabela's that she started branching out into other species and firearms. Becky has been turkey, antelope, duck, deer, and dove hunting. She has hunted antelope in Nevada and South Dakota, deer in South Dakota and Minnesota, turkey and doves in South Dakota, and ducks in Nebraska. She has harvested animals with her shotgun, rifle, and bow.

When I asked Becky about obstacles she faces, in pure Becky fashion she finds the glass half full in everything. Most people would think access, but not her. The access to hunt from her vehicle, access to a track chair, and local landowners

willing to assist her with places to hunt. The obstacle is going independently, she always feels more comfortable when someone is with her. They are there to help track the animal, recover the animal, clean the animal, and/or navigate rough terrain with her. The second obstacle she faces is time. A mentor once told her "Busy people get things done" and she dislikes using the "too busy" excuse, but she does find this to be a common problem with her. She believes if she had more confidence to hunt independently, she would hunt more, and take to the field on the spur of the moment, but planning the hunt, planning a partner to go with now puts another schedule in the mix. She finds herself not hunting as much as she would like.

Becky hunts with or provides support to various hunting organizations. Becky serves as a mentor and board member of South Dakota Youth Hunting Adventures (SDYHA). Becky has



been on antelope hunts with Nevada Outdoorsman in Wheelchairs (NOW) as well as special deer hunts for people who use special mobility with the South Dakota Corp of Engineers. I asked Becky what she wanted to tell the world about hunting as a disabled hunter. She stated, "If you feel your injury and/or illness has disqualified you from being in the outdoors, you are sorely mistaken. There are programs and people all over the world that want to help and improve your quality of life and experience. I may let time and confidence get in the way of mini adventures, but I go all in when a big opportunity presents itself."

THE WATERFOWL GURU

Rachel Voss is a popular Waterfowl guru from the state of Washington. Rachel is an all-around outdoors woman as she is a Washington State Hunting Representative, Conservation Specialist and as she states; "a waterfowl and elk junky." Twenty years ago, Rachel was diagnosed with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), which is a chronic inflammatory lung disease that causes obstructed airflow from the lungs. It's typically caused by long-term exposure to irritating gases or particulate matter, most often from cigarette smoke. But the thing is, Rachel has never smoked. Rachel's was caused by her childhood asthma. In some cases, severe and complicated asthma eventually becomes COPD. Rachel deals with symptoms daily. Coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, especially during physical activity, chest tightness, and lack of energy. The main problem Rachel deals with are episodes called exacerbations. A common cold, smoke, and many other triggers land her in the hospital. Rachel is admitted 1-3 times a year and her stays often entail ICU, being hooked up to machines, high flow oxygen, and intravenous steroids for several days.

As Rachel's COPD started to cause more problems, she had to have a port put into her chest to enable quick and rapid access for the administration of intravenous steroids. Rachel slowly lost venous access, and this was the last resort for emergencies and long-term use.... her average length of a hospital stay is 13-19 days. Over the past twenty years she has had to have her port replaced three times. They have a lifespan of 5-6 years. Power ports are placed in the chest, where they are anchored, and the tubing goes up around the clavicle and down the vein to the top of her vena cava, her heart.



While Rachel was learning to adjust to her new life with COPD, she also became a waterfowl hunter. Rachel just recently wrapped up her sixteenth season. Rachel's port is on the right side of her body, and she is right handed so she has definitely had to learn to adapt while hunting. Rachel cannot take shots straight above her head, as that is the most likely position that the gun could shift and recoil against her port. No matter how hard one tries, things happen. We shoulder quickly to make a shot, and from time-to-time, placement of the gun can be off. It happens to the best of us. One recoil from a 3 1/2-inch shell and it could literally displace her port, creating an

emergency situation. This is a risk she is always taking with her six plus weeks out in the duck and goose blind in a season.

In the late waterfowl season, temps often drop to single digits. Any temp for Rachel below 40 degrees causes issues for her. She has very limited lung capacity (especially in her left lung) and the cold temps cause her O2 levels to drop. Oxygen saturation is then an issue... because of this she carries a portable oxygen tank with her to help with her breathing, as well as a pulse oximeter to monitor herself. Another thing about this girl, she is legally a disabled hunter. You won't hear her whine or complain though,

Gray's Shotgun Cache

she's always so positive and still out there. When temps stay consistently cold, she doesn't let her pride get in the way, and will hunt a disabled blind, so she can still be out doing what drives her. She truly makes the best of her situation. Can you imagine carrying an oxygen tank with you to do what you love? Oxygen, an item that can blow up with one wrong move. I have one word for that—dedication.

INSPIRATION

Hunting is a past time that has been shared among families for many generations. Originally hunting was strictly to feed your family, hunting is now not only to feed your family, but also for

conservation and sport. As an “able-bodied-ish” hunter, I do take for granted the ease I have to walk up to a stand or out in the field. Yes, I do have to use adaptive shotguns and stands for my rifle, but my legs get me to my post with no problem. These ladies truly beat all odds to do what they love. If you are interested in learning about the organizations discussed above be sure to look for my next article where I provide more details on each of these wonderful organizations that provide assistance to people with disabilities. ■



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BY MATTHEW GAY

Syren Elevate Trap Combo



Syren has brought a true multi-sport gun to the market, built specifically for ladies. This company continues to be responsive to the feedback of lady shooters in terms of what they desire in a target gun. This Syren model hits the nail on the head and brings true versatility to lady shooters at a phenomenal price point.

INITIAL IMPRESSION

The Elevate combo comes packaged in an elegant purple Syren hard case. The combo hard case is fitted specifically for this model. A separate compartment for the unsingle barrel and the changeable ribs is situated on one side of the case while the over-under barrel and the receiver is contained in the other side. Also contained in the receiver side are the choke tubes in their own case, tools for the adjustable comb and trigger, manuals and a choke wrench. The receiver comes supplied with a cloth Syren storage sleeve and the respective sections fit securely in place. The Tri-Wood is well figured and accents the styling of the receiver.

THE RECEIVER

The receiver of this model has a matte blue finish with a sleek portion on the side of the receiver which resembles jeweled carbon fiber. "Elos N2 Elevate" is engraved in the sides of the receiver,



which really stands out in the white and purple lettering. The bottom of the receiver also has this contrasting lettering and displays the manufacturer and model. The barrel selector is designed in typical Italian fashion, situated atop the tang mounted safety. The action of this model is of traditional under-lug design, the sample locked up very tight. The ejectors were strong and well timed.

The trigger on the Syren Elevate is excellent, breaking crisply right at three pounds for both barrels. No quantifiable creep was felt. As mentioned above the trigger blade is adjustable with the simple application of the factory provided Allen key, allowing for precise grip length customization. Wood to metal fit was superb with complimentary lines flowing in harmony with the geometry of the receiver.

THE BARRELS

Syren employs advanced technology in their barrel design but first a look at the basics. The over/under barrels are pleasantly weighted giving the shotgun great balance. The ventilated mid-rib helps to rapidly remove heat while the matte blue finish decreases glare. On top of the barrels the QRR (Quick Release Rib) is the feature that makes this model a true multi-sport gun. Two ribs are provided with the combo, one designed to shoot a 50/50 point of impact and another designed to shoot a 65/35 POI.

Swapping the rib is simple. By pushing out a pin secured by an internal detent located at the receiver end above the trunnions, the rib can be moved forward to release it from the permanently affixed catch on the muzzle end of the barrel. Changing the rib takes about 30 seconds, the pin can be removed with a simple ink pen. Both ribs are supplied with a white Bradley style front bead and a silver mid bead. The rib securely locked into place.

The Syren Elevate Combo comes with a 34-inch unsingle trap barrel threaded for the Exis HP competition chokes supplied with the combo. This barrel is designed to shoot 70/30 point of impact making it the perfect choice for singles and handicap events. Being an unsingle barrel, recoil is directed straight back, reducing muzzle flip.

THE STOCK

The Turkish walnut stock of the Elevate is finished with the patented Triwood process. The TRIWOOD™ finish, introduced by FABARM in 2002, is a hi-tech process to improve the walnut grain and offer excellent waterproof protection. This process brings out the warmth and feel of the wood. The walnut quality, contrast and grade are extremely important to obtain a perfect TRIWOOD finish. The objective is to have a perfect mix between the original and additional grains. TRIWOOD is not a film fixed

on the walnut; it's a process to deposit ink on a piece of wood which accentuates the natural figure of the walnut. The TRIWOOD stock is protected by a tough scratch – resistant acrylic varnish. The furniture on this model has an attractive satin finish that highlights the figure of the walnut. The checkering is well done and comfortable. The adjustable portion of the comb is wood but is covered in a durable synthetic material that gives the look of a leather covered pad. The Micro Metric 3D adjustable comb comes standard on the Syren Elevate. One of the most important aspects of an adjustable comb is the ability to set it and keep it in place. The hardware on this model is very strong, staying in place once set. Syren includes the Kinetic recoil reducer standard and factory installed. The grip length can be easily fine-tuned with the adjustable trigger blade. The recoil pad provided with this model is a 22mm thick Microcell.

The Schnabel forearm is well matched to the buttstock attaching to the barrel lug with a sturdy slide button mechanism. Wood to metal fit is excellent and the fore-end locks securely into place. Checkering is well executed and comfortable.

BARREL SCIENCE

Syren utilizes TriBore technology in its barrels. The science behind TriBore is quite convincing



and the test data it produces supports the effectiveness of the design. Simply put, the barrel has three internal profiles. The forcing cones are significantly lengthened creating a slow transition to the 18.7 mm main bore, then prior to the shot reaching the choke, there is another slightly tapered section, 205 mm long, which slowly reduces the bore diameter to that of the choke at 18.4 mm. Syren claims that this innovation has the same effect as the over-bored barrels produced by other manufacturers (reduction of friction thus less pellet deformation), without the reduction in velocity realized by a rapid gas expansion into a larger chamber. The relevant factor is the slow step down to the choke constriction diameter. This eliminates the shoulder of the choke which is where it meets the bore once fully threaded into the barrel. According to Syren's testing data, on a 30" target at 30 meters, the TriBore barrels achieved a 13% higher rate of pellet strike with a modified Exis HP choke than their competitors.

SHOOTING THE SYREN ELEVATE COMBO

Since this shotgun is designed for the lady shooter, who better to demo it than Syren's very own Pro Staffer and a favorite Jersey girl shooter, Grace Callahan. The adaptation of the Elevate to a female shooter is evident when watching Grace mount this shotgun. The fit was nearly perfect out of the box and fine tuning was quick and simple. Again, with the unsingle barrel, recoil is better managed for those long tournament days by transferring the energy straight back and

reducing muzzle flip. The 30" O/U barrel is perfectly suited to double trap and other disciplines with the versatility and technology of the Exis HP choke system. The major advantage to the Elevate Combo is the versatility contained within one package. It is also important to note that the Elevate has a reduced length of pull (13.9 inches, adjustable at the trigger), an increased pitch and drop at comb to accommodate measurements of the female shooter. The easily changeable QRR rib from a 65/35 to 50/50 point of impact combined with an unsingle option makes this model extremely

attractive to multi-discipline and dedicated trap shooters alike. Add to that the support of a company with a proven track record for excellent service and responsiveness to their clientele, and lady shooters have an excellent option that meets the needs of all disciplines. ■ *Matthew Gay is a shooting instructor from Michigan, the Head Coach of the Olivet College Shotgun Team, Vice President of the Michigan Scholastic Clay Target Program, Bunker Trap junkie and an NSCA Master Class competitor.*



SPECIFICATIONS	
MODEL:	SYREN ELEVATE TRAP COMBO
GAUGE:	12
BARRELS:	30" O/U TWO QUICK RELEASE RIBS (QRR SYSTEM) AND A 34" UNSINGLE TRAP BARREL ***
LENGTH OF PULL:	13.9" (ADJUSTABLE AT TRIGGER BLADE)
DROP AT COMB:	1 1/2" (ADJUSTABLE)
DROP AT MONTE CARLO:	2"
DROP AT HEEL:	2 1/2"
CAST AT HEEL:	0.25"
CAST AT TOE:	0.5"
PITCH:	7 DEGREES
GRIP LENGTH:	3.5" AT CENTER POSITION (ADJUSTABLE)
O/U BARREL TOP RIB:	QUICK RELEASE CHANGEABLE RIB (1) 65/35 POI AND (1) 50/50 POI - 10MM TO 8MM TAPERED
UNSSINGLE TOP RIB:	70/30 POI
WEIGHT:	7 LBS 11 OZ (WITH O/U) 7 LBS 14 OZ (WITH UNSINGLE)
CHOKES:	HYPERBOLIC EXIS HP (SKEET, IMPROVED CYLINDER, MODIFIED, IMPROVED MODIFIED AND FULL)
WARRANTY:	5 YEARS
SUGGESTED RETAIL:	\$5125 \$175 UPGRADE FOR LEFT HAND STOCK OPTION \$1700 UNSINGLE ADD-ON OPTION FOR CURRENT ELOS N2 ELEVATE O/U OWNERS (REQUIRES FITTING)
***32" BARRELS AVAILABLE BY SPECIAL ORDER FOR AN ADDITIONAL CHARGE	



Teaching Women By A Woman: *Basic Pistol*



BY
TAMMY STEIN
1840 INC.

It came to me one day on how to teach basic handguns to women who are beginners and hesitant on how to start their journey of personal safety. I remember initially how I was treated and talked to by instructors with military and/or law enforcement backgrounds, which I am neither of, and how off-putting their attitude towards women was. I am just a mom with three daughters that I love dearly, who came to the realization that it was up to me to protect them and myself. I became captivated with the subject of firearms training and really starting learning how the handgun works and how to teach other women to safely handle them.

THE IMPETUS

Soon, I began to realize I could totally relate to other women that were unsure of themselves, anxious, nervous, along with many other emotions on the subject of guns, because I was the same in the beginning. I decided I wasn't going to be unsure and scared of something I did not understand. So, I set out to learn all I could about handguns and their proper use simply because of what the pistol offered me and my girls. To me it offered these four things: distance, equalizer, reliability and dependability.

I love asking questions, I am curious what brought them on this new journey and challenge of self-defense. I want to know why they think now it's time to learn and what demystified the dangers of handguns in their mind.

I tell them my horrifying story when my first daughter, Amber, was only three months old. We

were at Sam's Club—Amber was secured in her carrier, inside the shopping basket. I was busy looking at the book table when a lady came up and started pushing my shopping basket away. I told her in a calm voice that it was my shopping cart, but she kept pushing my baby away. I became Momma Bear “THAT’S MY BASKET” I screamed. I got everyone’s attention and that woman ran out of the store. This attempt of trying to steal my baby was overwhelming for me. I just couldn’t believe this almost happened. Reality had just hit me upside the head.

CAREFUL PROCESS

I visit with my students for a short time about their and my journey that got us to this place as we begin the conversational training about handguns. We start with firearms safety discussing Col. Jeff Coopers four “Cardinal Rules” about safety and why and what they mean to me and them.

- 1 Treat all guns as if they are loaded.
- 2 Never let the muzzle point at anything



- we don't want to destroy.
- 3 Keep your finger off and away from the trigger until you have decided to shoot.
 - 4 Know the backstop and what could be beyond that area.

I generally start with “So, let’s start with discussing how we most often find a handgun.” It’s usually in a safe, possibly laying on its side. So how do we handle it, inspect it and treat it as all guns are always loaded...right? It’s simple but so many times these important points are overlooked. We make a gun with our dominant hand to pick up a gun. We always pick up a handgun in this manner so it will become a trained habit. This is when we keep our trigger finger away from the trigger and trigger guard. We then keep the muzzle pointed in the safest direction and open the slide to inspect and verify the status of the handgun. We also look in the chamber and put the small pinky finger in the chamber, so we know for sure the handgun is empty.

We want to believe the handgun is empty, but we must verify the status of the handgun. It’s nice for someone to say it is empty, but it’s much safer to verify the status and confirm that it is unloaded.

We have just done all four safety rules, covered them, explained the value of them and the safety each rule creates for yourself and others around you. If you are careless, and don’t respect the handgun as you would any other tool, whether it’s a shovel, rake or car—you are a tragedy waiting to occur.

Then I move to the next part that many people do not spend time on—the name of the handgun parts and proper terminology of the handgun, such as the front sight, sight radius, rear sight, slide, slide stop, slide lock, magazine release, frame, serrated grooves in the slide and what they’re for and the texture of the handgun’s frame.

TIME FOR HANDS ON

Here’s the fun part—we open it up and field strip the handgun. We open the hood and discuss the internal safeties. I also associate these safeties with things like the airbags in cars and anti-lock brakes. These are the moving parts on the inside that show how much thought and development has gone into safety. We now know its function



and we are now more interested and comfortable, with the desire to learn how to use it.

When we put it back together, we talk about the make, model, caliber and how to understand it, like knowing what gas our car takes. We should know this information just like we know the gas mileage we get on our car. I show where to find this information on the handgun, such as the slide, barrel and frame.

At this point, we move to ammunition. This is the “show-and-tell” part of the four parts of a cartridge—the primer pellet, cartridge case, powder, and bullet. I have all these parts to show my students so they can see and touch them.

I explain how, where and why we have safe storage practices. We discuss how to store your handgun, your ammunition and how to keep them out of the reach of untrained and unauthorized people. We allow time to talk about their season of life and some options that may work for them.

Moving on, we get to have more fun, we talk about the purpose of the handgun. How, why, where and what they are concerned about when having it for their protection. Then we start with the fundamentals of shooting such as stance, grip, sight alignment, sight picture, trigger control, breath and follow through.

YEAH...SIZE DOES REALLY MATTER

I explain that hand size and gun size do matter. One size handgun and its caliber will not fit everone. I always take the time to see what the best options for them would be. When talking

about and demonstrating the proper grip, I also explain the frame size of the handgun, single stack magazine width versus double stack. The size of their hands, their strength and ability. To be able to confidently operate the handgun is what really matters—the ability to use it, confidence with how it feels in the hands, along with talking about managing the felt recoil of different calibers.

Stance—we stand much like we did when we were younger (bring back high school standing memories) with our feet, hips and shoulders all facing the target.

Next, we discuss the trigger (which is so scary to many women), how and where to place the trigger finger on the trigger and how to consistently press the trigger straight to the rear. I use the analogy of the gas pedal of a car to help explain pressing the trigger. We always place our foot on the gas pedal at the same spot on the pedal, and we do not lift it off the pedal to slow down or speed up. The trigger is managed just like the gas pedal. We control the trigger by pressing straight back and control the movement back forward to reset, without taking the finger completely off the trigger. I discuss the trigger safety, the take up, or the amount of movement (slack) the chosen pistol has before the actual trigger press starts and how to reset the trigger. I also explain, depending on manufacturer, how the handgun type, size, weight and much more will determine the necessary strength required to smoothly press the trigger.

We move to sight alignment and sight picture. Looking through the rear sight, like it’s a window at the front sight. Total concentration and focus

on front sight, not the target. I spend a little bit of time on breath control, this skill takes more time and practice to master.

We do all these things in the classroom before we do live fire. We practice range etiquette, moving handgun from range bag to firing line and ready table. We practice picking it up, loading and much more—all with dummy ammunition. The student gets the feel of how the handgun works, how the parts move, how to rack the slide, or open the cylinder. How to lock the slide open and why we do that. The act of firing is achieved in the classroom with dummy ammunition before moving to the range.

OFF TO THE RANGE

Now the range isn’t so scary, the unknown has been explained and the student has handled the pistol and experienced doing everything they want to know without the loud noise, felt recoil and much more.

All the time needed to ask questions, allowing them to be relaxed, deal with their emotions, and slowly move through the unknown skills of firing a handgun for self-protection is allowed. It is so awesome to witness these ladies learn this new skill and enjoy the time we have together as I absorb how each student processes the information that may become a live saving skill for them.



Editor’s Note: Tammy Stein is a native Texan with family dating back to the 1840 Republic of Texas when her great, great, great grandfather came to Texas with a land grant.

Tammy found a passion for guns when she took her first firearms training class. Since then, Tammy has logged thousands of hours training with several highly respected national and international known instructors and major firearms manufactures. Her commitment to educate others regarding firearm safety, proper gun-handling and responsibilities of ownership are her sole intent. Involving

other individuals in the fun sport of shooting, and at the same time create the excitement of knowing they are empowered to protect themselves and their family. Tammy’s on-going mission is to empower and engage individuals in practical firearms training. She feels that once the passion is presented through proper safety training and firearm knowledge more people will benefit from owning a firearm. A great trainer needs to show they are passionate, organized, knowledgeable, establish a friendly rapport with their student’s, be flexible and strive to increase their student’s firearms knowledge.

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Ida Brown

*#31 with a Bullet
...err ... Shotshell*

*Sometimes, it pays to
listen to your parents...*

Had she not done so, Ida Brown would likely be playing club volleyball at some college somewhere, relatively unknown. Instead, she is a member of the Shotgun Shooting team at the prestigious Hillsdale College in southern Michigan. In January 2022, at the Tuscon Team Selection Matches, she placed fourth in the Open Women's, and first the College Women's divisions. As the youngest member of the USA Shooting National Team, in March 2022 she won a silver medal with the Women's Trap team at the International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) World Cup competition in Nicosia, Cyprus. As of this writing, the ISSF ranks Ida at #31 in the world among women trap shooters. Thanks, Mom and Dad.

BY TOM CARNEY



AN UNLIKELY ROUTE

Growing up in Valley Springs, California, Ida had no interest at all in competitive shooting. Sure, like loads of kids, she had a BB gun and would try to outshoot her younger brother, Thommy, on stationary soda cans. But that didn't really count. "This was about the extent of my interest in firearms," she says, adding "I wasn't interested in shooting sports or doing it competitively; it was quite the opposite, actually."

This is where her parents, Bruce and Arlene Brown, come in. When Ida was 11, they made the determination to place her and her brother on a local competitive shooting team. She didn't like it. "I wanted to quit before I had even started." But at age 11, you pretty much have to do what you're told, and Ida attributes this entire phase of her life to her parents: "They were the sole reason that I started shooting; they were the ones who refused to let me quit shooting after only one practice."

The kicker is that her parents didn't realize they had placed Ida and Thommy into competition. They just wanted to get the kids a proper and safe introduction to firearms, "to have the kids gain knowledge of guns and their appropriate use, to respect the gun," says Arlene. Ida has had an interesting love/hate relationship with the sport. Check that. She initially had a hate relationship with it. Now she loves it. She felt she was "bad" at the sport and Thommy's initial

success quickly eroded her interest. But, the Browns wouldn't let Ida quit because they are the type of parents who teach their children that they should finish things they start. Ida now realizes that, "Not allowing me to quit was simply a lesson in resilience." She remained dispirited for about half of the season. But, then her competitive juices started flowing and things changed.

THE SPIRIT OF A COMPETITOR

"Improving was more appealing than quitting. I am by nature a very competitive person and that is really the only reason I stuck with the sport. It is

still very much a contributing factor into why I continue to pursue shooting competitively."

Jordan Hintz, Head Shotgun Coach at Hillsdale, seconds that motion. "Ida is very committed to the shooting sports and has put in a ton of effort, both in high school and in college. She is very talented but not afraid to put in the work. She is putting in a lot of time outside of practices, even in the summer, and it shows. She has seen improvement across the board."

As she improved her skills, Ida likewise improved her attitude toward the activity. "I grew to love both the sport and the community involved in shooting. I have since stuck with the



sport because I love it. I love the diversity of it and the fact that there is always something new to learn or perfect." Combine Ida's desire to learn new things and to make improvements with her competitive nature, work ethic, and winning personality, and it's easy to see why any school would want her. But she didn't want just any school.

A JUDICIOUS DECISION ON COLLEGE

Hillsdale is a small, private school that remains independent by refusing to accept any money at all from state or federal sources. It thrives on donations. A healthy donation from the The Hal & Jean Glassen Memorial Foundation allowed the school to develop its John A. Halter Shooting Sports Education Center. The center offers state-of-the-art facilities for small arms, archery and shotgun shooting sports. In addition to a 22-station sporting clays course, the 116-acre compound includes a trap field, 5-stand course, trap fields, international skeet fields and five exquisitely equipped bunkers for Olympic training. In fact, the Halter Center's facilities are so impressive that in 2019 it was named the "Certified Eastern Regional Training and Competition Center for the USA Shooting National Team."

In a nutshell, that is what attracted Ida to Hillsdale, as she explains, "There are lots of other colleges across the country that offer shotgun programs similar to Hillsdale's, but no college has a range that compares to ours. I picked Hillsdale because of the shooting program." While in high school, Ida attended Hillsdale's Liberty and Learning Youth Conference, which introduced



Tucson



USA Trap Team

her to both the Hillsdale philosophy and curriculum, and the Halter Center. “I practiced with the team and fell in love with the college. I found it to be the best of both worlds with an excellent academic reputation and a shotgun team with a history of success,” she says.

Hintz describes Ida as “a good teammate and a strong competitor with a strong work ethic.” More than that, “Ida is a great person for Hillsdale. She is dutiful in her studies, believes strongly in the mission of the college, and is always a great ambassador for both the school and our team.” Ida is the ultimate ambassador for Hillsdale. More than just fulfilling her tasks when representing the school, she infuses the situation with her pleasant, friendly, polite, and enthusiastic personality. In short, she is simply a joy to be around. She says her mother demonstrated these qualities for her to learn.

RESPONSIBILITY AND INTEGRITY AS AN ETHOS

One recent episode illustrates the best of all that is Ida. In early June, she and the USA Shooting team returned from World Cup competition in Baku, Azerbaijan, where she set her Personal Record of 110/125. After a long flight, including seven hours’ worth of layovers and a two-hour drive to Hillsdale from the airport, she arrived at her dorm at 2am. By 11am, she was at the Halter Center where, in her capacity as an intern, she had been asked to help coach shooters from a private group that was meeting there.



*Eye exercises
AKA: Catch*



Grab rest when you can

On campus and except for the hours she spends at the Halter Center, Ida is like any other college student. She is an exercise science major with a biology and chemistry minor. She would like to continue her education at a physical therapy school and then work for a sports team. Socially, she says, “I made it a point to have friends outside of the shooting team. I think it’s necessary to have friends that are outside that portion of my life to help create a balance.” So she has maintained friendships from her freshman year and has established some with her classmates. She also belongs to the Pi Beta Phi sorority.

Any free time on campus she will likely spend at the gym or on a run. For relaxing, she heads to the beach at nearby Baw Beese Lake to read. See, she’s just like any regular college student. “Except”, she said, “every time I go out to shoot, it is 25 individual battles between myself and the targets.” And she aims to win. ■



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IDEAS FOR THE *Impossible Person* TO BUY FOR

BY MATTHEW GAY



It's true that, as much as possible, LadyShooter Lifestyles magazine wants to offer perspectives from ladies in the various sports and pursuits we cover. In this case, and I promise it's not self-serving although my wife is sure to read this, it may help to get ideas from someone who has frequently been accused as being impossible to buy for.

THE SURVEY

People in this category tend to simply go and get what they want, when they want it. We have specific styles and very detailed specifications for the various things we purchase and use in our hobbies and crafts. So, in an effort to not seem impersonable, my wife sends out a fun survey of sorts that gathers information to share with all. The things in the survey can be tailored such as favorite candy, movie, hobby, caliber of firearm, clothing sizes, reading material etcetera. This was kind of a fun exercise as things change from year to year, even with my adult children. In addition to what they are currently in to, it allows me to watch them grow, change, and develop.

In the case of those hard to but for individuals, this survey is a prime opportunity to extract information out of them that they would normally not divulge. Although it seems

counterintuitive, those of us who go get what we want, greatly appreciate personal items that don't necessarily cost an arm and a leg. For example, as much as I enjoy joking with my children every year that the \$7,500.00 Breitling Navitimer chronograph is what I want for Christmas, I was quite happy with a custom travel mug adorned with a beautiful wrap-around portrait of my old, retired bird dog, in his prime, flushing a chukar.

THE NOSTALGIC TYPE AND SUPERSTITION

The key is to think outside the normal things that the individual buys for themselves and find something they would never buy for themselves but would appreciate for the personal touch incorporated. Think about what they like to do in their down time. I am not talking about when they are hunting, fishing, or shooting but true



down time sitting in their den relaxing. In my case, I enjoy reading classic literature and happen to be quite nostalgic, so an assortment of Hemmingway, Steinbeck or Faulkner would be wonderful.

Most like me tend to collect things. In my case, old American made folding pocketknives are



A gift of a knife given to me; hand engraved with the King of gamebirds

something I simply cannot acquire enough of. I am that guy who rummages through the boxes of used knives at a gun show so that I can pick out the nicest ones, that just need to be cleaned up, and get a package deal. No matter what item your difficult relative or partner collects, they would certainly enjoy the opportunity to display their collection. Most collectable items have display cases or stands, and such an item would likely be well received as a gift. Everyone in my family knows I will always appreciate a pocketknife of nearly any type. Don't forget the old superstition about giving a knife as a gift. The gift of a knife will sever the relationship between the giver and the recipient, unless there is a penny attached and given with the knife, which is immediately returned to the giver as a symbol of payment.

BESPOKE

When something is referred to as "bespoke" it means an item commissioned for a particular purpose, for a particular person. This description also alludes to high quality and in some cases heirloom type items. There is a plethora of leather items available by quality manufacturers which can easily be customized with embossing of initials, game scenes, flags, and many other graphics. If properly cared for, well-made leather products can literally last for generations. For example, your partner may be a bird hunter, but they would never spend 50.00 on a leather game strap to easily carry out their birds from the duck blind, or a bandolier to carry shotgun shells.

This is because they just throw them in the decoy bags to transport to the truck and shotgun shells fit into a pocket. This would qualify as an item this hunter would certainly like to have, but would not buy for themselves, because they have devised a practical and free method by which to complete the task. This is not only a gift opportunity for Mr. or Mrs. Impossible, but by also having their initials and their bird dog's name on the strap, you have truly scored a great gift. From an embossed leather cigar case to a bound leather journal, sporting the recipient's name, there is an item that fits each personality.

I'M INTO...

Most people, even the uncomplicated ones, have parallel interests that may not be related to one another. For example, I am a history nut with a concentration on pre-World War II through the golden age of jet aviation.



My leather-bound journal will tell my great-great grandchildren about me

I was surfing the internet and tripped over a desk clock that was cast from an original World War II airplane yoke, which had a brass clock in the middle that resembled an altimeter. I thought, "that would look great on my desk", but I would never buy it for myself. This type of thing would make a great gift and searching based on that interest, "World War II aviation gifts", brings up hundreds of options.

A BACK-UP PLAN

When all else fails, have the impossible person in your life create a wish list on Amazon and share that list with you. I am not saying to buy exactly what is on the list, but it will give you some insight into what they may like. When all else fails, and yes this is self-serving, you cannot go wrong with a subscription to TrapShooting USA, ClayShooting USA or LadyShooter Lifestyles magazine. ■

Editor's note: Matthew Gay is a shooting instructor from Michigan, the Head Coach of the Olivet College Clay Target Team, Vice-President of the Michigan Scholastic Clay Target Program Board of Directors, a bunker trap junkie and Master Class Sporting Clays competitor.

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Hearing Protection & Young Ears

BY MATTHEW GAY

“The Right Way to Protect Little Ears”



It's no big secret that hearing protection is a must for shooters and spectators, but it's just as important to make sure that the hearing protection one uses is effective. This is particularly important for youth with growing and developing bodies. Is the hearing protection commonly used working as designed? Do the users of these products know how to properly use them? What are the most effective types of ear protection? We'll look at these questions and focus part of this on youth. You might just be surprised at what you learn in this article.

THE TECHNICAL STUFF

Sound is measured in units called decibels, more specifically A-weighted decibels (dBA). The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has identified the levels of acceptable and dangerous levels of noise exposure for humans working in any industry. This assessment is equally applicable to individuals participating in the shooting sports. Consequently, hearing protection is rated utilizing the same (dBA) but in the context of noise reduction rating (NRR).

Except for my three-year-old granddaughter, when she goes into her excited screaming mode during her evening “zoomies”, the average person-to-person conversation ranges between 60 and 70 decibels and is generally considered a safe level. Based on the OSHA determination, a single exposure or repeated exposure to any sounds at or above 85 decibels can lead to hearing loss. The report of a firearm starts at 140 decibels and can increase from there based on multiple factors. A single exposure from the report of a .22 long rifle without hearing protection doubles the minimum acceptable level of noise for a human.



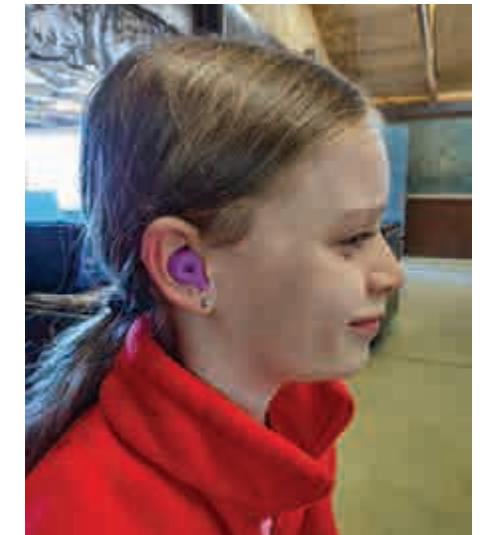
COMMON TYPES OF HEARING PROTECTION

The types of ear protection most commonly used are foam ear plugs, solid molded ear plugs and earmuffs. Types and technical aspects of each of the aforementioned methods for hearing protection tend to vary. Electronic control of the sound levels, Bluetooth capability are just a few of the options for high tech hearing protection available. Many shooters use what are commonly referred to as “foamies.” These foamies are cheap, readily available and easy to use. The custom fitted and molded ear plugs start at a very reasonable cost but can get pricey with the addition of electronics or other accoutrements. Earmuff style hearing protection generally offers the same options as the molded ear plugs but without the need to insert a device into the ear canal.

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THESE?

Being the most common type used, foamies are perhaps the one type that has the most possibility of being compromised by improper use. When it comes to hearing protection, the name of the game is “noise reduction rating.” This rating tells the user how much the device can reduce exposure to potentially damaging noise when properly applied. For the shooting sports, an NRR rating of no less than 28 is recommended. It is important to note that there are earplugs on the market which only have an NRR as low as 22, so it is important to know what your ear plugs are rated for.

Expert estimates suggest that as much as 98



percent of foam earplug users do not insert and utilize the product correctly. When properly applied, foamies completely seal the ear canal when fully expanded. The major reasons that foamies fail to work as designed are; not being deeply seated enough in the ear canal and not having space to fully expand due to improper sizing. The reason expansion is important is in the design of the plug. When fully expanded, the foam creates very small air spaces which serve to block and alter the sound waves exposed to the ear.

Custom molded ear plugs and properly rated ear muffs both perform at a high level to protect the hearing of the wearer. Both have options for electronic devices that would allow noise to freely pass up to a safe level, while blocking potentially damaging levels of sound. This makes communication between shooters much easier and eliminates the potential for a shooter to remove ear protection in order to talk to another shooter, exposing them to possible damage. Both are good options but remember, the ear muff may impact a shooter's gun mount and can hit the stock of a long gun when mounted.

THE IMPACT ON YOUNG EARS AND LEARNING

It's commonly understood that hearing loss in adults can lead to some maladies like depression and other conditions that impact quality of life. However, the impact hearing loss can have on children reaches further than most consider. First, the statistics seem to point toward some children being misdiagnosed with, or screened for behavior issues and learning disabilities, when

they actually have a hearing problem. The CDC says that fifteen percent of children ages six to nineteen have lost a minimum of sixteen decibels in at least one ear. Children with this level of hearing often present behavioral and learning problems such as restlessness in class, lapses in concentration and hyperactivity because of this disconnection. It's been suggested that a student with hearing loss in one ear has about a thirty-five percent chance of failing a grade. All the above culminates in a reduced quality of life for a young one trying to learn and make their way through childhood.

As one can now understand, little ear canals are not yet sized to handle a pair of standard sized foam earplugs out of the one box available at the gun club. It would be impossible for the foam to expand adequately to interrupt the sound waves as it was designed. It is vital to make sure the safety equipment our youth shooters are using is properly sized and appropriately used. Custom molded ear plugs are a great option but make sure to check for proper fit each subsequent year as the youth grows. As the ear canal grows, it would be prudent to have new molded plugs made. Properly rated ear muffs are a great option provided it does not interfere with proper gun mount. They are my personal choice for pistol shooting but interfere with my shotgun mount and would scratch and dent the comb of my target gun.

I would encourage all shooters and parents of youth shooters to do their due diligence in ensuring the hearing protection they or their youth shooters are employing is truly protecting their hearing. Check the noise reduction rating, the sizing and make sure you and your youth shooter are using the product properly. ■

Editor's note: Matthew Gay is a shooting instructor from Michigan, the Head Coach of the Olivet College Clay Target Team, Vice-President of the Michigan Scholastic Clay Target Program Board of Directors, a bunker trap junkie and Master Class Sporting Clays competitor.



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COMING SOON

California Assembly Bill 2571

A Direct Attack on Our Way of Life

BY MATTHEW GAY

As a quasi-prologue to this article, its important to note that the following is a slight variation from some of the material our readers typically consume in ClayShootingUSA Magazine. It is however of great importance to highlight situations and forces that are destructive and negatively impact this sport we are all so passionate about. The tone of this article is intentionally stern and judgmental in terms of the clear political subterfuge employed in the crafting, marketing, and passing of this bill.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THINGS

It's no secret that the state of society today, as it relates to firearms, is complicated at best. The country seems sharply divided along both geographic and party lines in their dispositions towards personal firearm ownership and usage. The supreme law of the land is extremely clear on this matter and states unequivocally, the intent of the amendment, which prohibits governments from infringing on the rights of the people to "keep and bear arms". Some have attempted to make disingenuous arguments such as, "this only applies to the militia". Such an assertion is so easily disproven by 10 US Title Code, sub-section 246 (b) 1 and 2, that its no longer worth pointing out to detractors. Support for this position has been confirmed by multiple Supreme Court decisions.

The next disingenuous argument goes something like "it was written before AR-15s and was meant only for muskets". This too is beyond disingenuous considering every other law, statute and amendment has been universally applied to the technology of today, such as in the realms of telecommunication, broadcasting, advertising, etcetera. For anyone that may try to assert that telecommunication, broadcasting and advertising has, "never killed anyone", my response would be, "now who is being naive?"

What we really have are multiple special interest groups which profit from, and quantify their existence, by the perpetuation of a controversy to the masses, masses who are generally uneducated on the facts and data. Those Americans who are uneducated on the use of firearms, and sadly some who know better, tend to simply accept the narrative as presented by some of those special interest factions, without question. In other words, many Americans willfully permit these "dispute peddlers", to fulminate discourse without either seeking truth on their own, or applying deductive reasoning to the matter.

"Facts and Data", "Follow the Science", these are mantras we have heard ad nauseum over the last couple of years on a multitude of issues. With that in mind, we will explore the data, evidence, facts, and realities of the impact from California's



passing of Assembly bill 2571, also known as the "Firearms Advertising to Minors Act".

THE ACT

When evaluating this quite short law, its important to dissect the words utilized for any contradiction(s) contained within the text itself. It is prudent to ascertain, not only what the authors were trying to accomplish, but why. Almost universally, bills begin with a reason statement. California's AB 2571 maintains this standard with the following verbiage, "The Legislature Hereby finds the proliferation of firearms to and among minors poses a threat to health, safety and security of all residents of, and visitors to this state". The text goes on to discuss the impulsive nature of minors, peer pressure, inability to recognize consequences, while citing unreferenced "current research and scientific evidence". Interestingly, in the third sentence the text admits that the legislature has "already

prohibited minors from possessing firearms". Further, federal (and some States) prohibit minors from purchasing firearms from licensed dealers.

After completing the first three sentences of this bill, a direct contradiction has already emerged. Consider this; firearms manufacturers sell to distributors, who then sell to dealers who are bound by law only to sell firearms to non-prohibited persons (non-minors, non-felons, etcetera). Those firearms manufacturers, distributors and dealers advertise. Is it logical that a company would spend advertising dollars to market a product to a demographic that could not legally purchase their product? I certainly wouldn't.

To take it further, the text clearly states that minors are prohibited from possessing firearms, we know they cannot purchase them, so the very act of a minor purchasing or possessing a firearm would be a violation of longstanding state and federal law. It appears the Legislature unwittingly concedes that the law prohibiting the acts they seek to prevent is not having the desired impact. They text goes on to state that "minors are especially susceptible to marketing appeals", but how does that matter if minors cannot purchase the product? In reality, it doesn't. The final portion of this sophomoric reason statement references the "unlawful sale of firearms to minors" and the "unlawful transfer of firearms to minors by adults that may possess those weapons lawfully". Notice all the language used to justify this bill evolves around "unlawful" behavior and is directed against entities, lawfully engaged in business. Does it make sense? Not at all, because a quantifiable public safety impact was never the intent of this law. This will become clear as you continue to read.

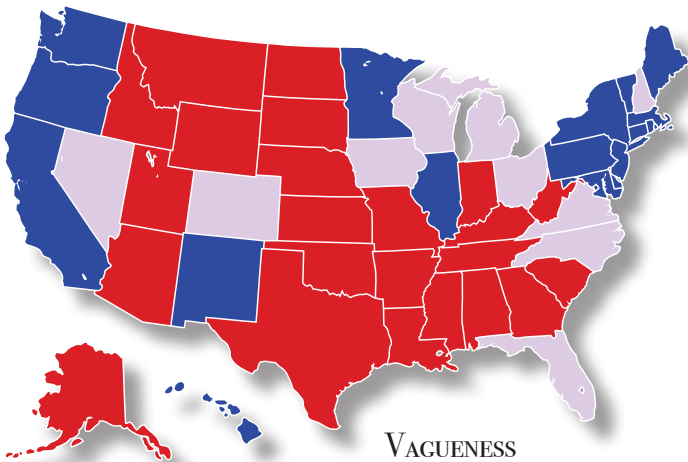
The Act claims that the intent is to "protect its citizens, especially minors, from gun violence". There is no cited evidence, studies, statistics, or other referenced data to support a position that advertising firearms has any impact whatsoever on "gun violence", perpetuated against citizens of any age class. In fact, it would be demonstrably false to assert that any sport shooting advertising directed to minors or sport shooting participation, has in any way increased the incidents of gun violence among minors. As most of our readers know, the shooting sports from primary school through college, stand as statistically the safest sport in existence.

Looking at the old, tired deceptions, which find their way into these strawman fallacies spewed by proponents of this kind of legislation,

we observe absolute refusal to acknowledge data. Politicians have said all kinds of absurd things in terms of numbers and statistics. Most of their assertions are complete and utter nonsense. For example, Barak Obama once commented that, "it is easier for a 12- or 13-year-old to

purchase a gun, and cheaper than it is for them to get a book". We all know this statement is patently false, but so many parroted and believed this falsehood. Let's not forget the one-term Governor and former confidant of the Clintons, Terry McAuliffe who said, "We lose 93 million Americans to gun violence every day". Notwithstanding the obvious misspoken statistic, McAuliffe issued a correction which stated he meant to say 93 Americans every day. The number is an accurate statistic, but completely without context. Two-thirds of that number are suicides. The 93 per day also includes accidents, gang shootings, justified police shootings and legal defensive use of firearms. The real number is less than 30 per day which meet the definition of "homicide", in a population of roughly 330 million.

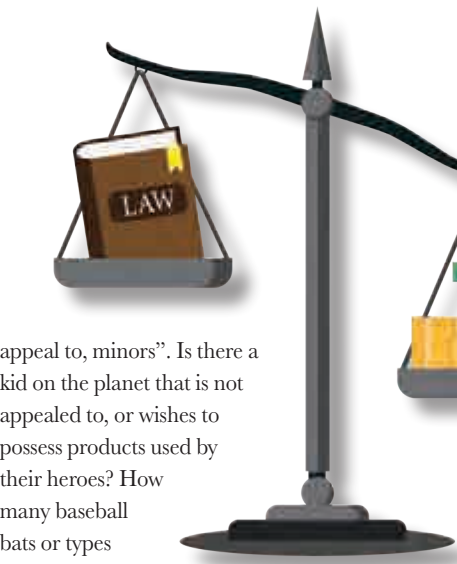
We cannot fail to include the ever-so-popular "assault weapons" drivel. In the 1990s, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms was unable to define what an "assault weapon" was. However, politicians today absolutely love the emotional response evoked by the word when engaging in erroneous hyperbole. When we look at the actual statistics published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the most recent Uniform Crime Report expanded homicide data table eight, we will find that what are commonly referred to as "assault weapons", are classified as "rifles" for the purpose of this report. The total deaths attributed to firearms across the United States stands at 10,258 including suicides, gang shootings, justified uses of firearms, Et al. Of those, "homicide by rifle" accounts for a total of 364, or 3.6 percent. Shotgun account for 200 annually, or 1.95 percent. With that clear statistic, why is the "assault weapon" fiction so effective? Research "Pavlovian Conditioning", and it will become quite clear.



From the definitions in AB 2571, to the potential actionable violations, and on through the penalty portions of the text; this bill relies on conjecture, assumption, and unquantifiable speculation as the impetus for cause of action. When listing all the actions that could be considered "advertising", the bill references "cartoons", "hats, t-shirts, clothing", "toys", "stuffed animals", or "games" that promote a "firearm industry member" (yet another made-up, catch-all definition), or a "firearm related product". Considering all the things or entities this could ensnare is a daunting task.

Ironically, reading further into the bill, it seems to give immense discretion to the "court" in determining several factors when considering liability due to civil action. Typically, a doctrine called "void for vagueness" applies to criminal statutes and prevents undue prosecutions of individuals under the guise of a law which does not clearly spell out the behavior which would violate it. This being a civil statute, it is different but not without potential peril in terms of the vagueness doctrine. With the wide latitude the legislature provided the court to levy civil fines for anyone violating this statute, with considerations spanning from the court's perceived "persistence" of the accused, to the accused's "net worth", it seems they may have run afoul of the portion of the void for vagueness doctrine that identifies this "extensive delegation of authority to judges and administrators", as a trigger which would make the statute void.

Section two of this bill maintains the concept of casting a wide net with the intent to discourage any and all legitimate entities to withdraw from the California market completely. While defining what constitutes "advertising" this section uses language such as, "products in colors, sizes or designs specifically designed to be used by, or



appeal to, minors”. Is there a kid on the planet that is not appealed to, or wishes to possess products used by their heroes? How many baseball bats or types of shoes have been sold to youth simply because a sports figure they admire wears or uses that product? It’s the very basis for which marketing exists, which makes the absurdity of the bill even more so. Further, the ambiguity in suggesting that a court could determine “intent” of marketing, as it pertains to who said marketing appeals to, is completely subjective. Emotions are unquantifiable and unmeasurable on any scale, and as such are not codifiable in statute. At least they are not supposed to be.

IMPACT

This section will not be inclusive of all impacts this bill will have on the people and state of California, but the intent is to hit the major points. Shortly after the announcement of this bill taking immediate effect, the US Clay Target League announced that they would be ceasing all operations in the State of California for fear of violating this statute. That has immediately impacted thousands of student athletes and based on the rapid growth of that program elsewhere, will impact unknown hundreds of thousands as a benefit of their never having an opportunity to participate in the program at all. The Scholastic Clay Target Program has added a disclaimer to their website which proclaims that minors from California should not proceed past the warning. In 2019 the California Department of Fish and Game instituted a R3 program (recruitment, retainment and reactivation) of sportsmen and women. In their plan they state that operations will include the creation, support and marketing of materials that “fully embrace” the shooting sports. Including archery, target shooting, rifle,

shotgun and pistol ranges and youth shooting leagues and activities as “worthwhile, important and valuable activities linked to hunting, hunting recruitment, retention and reactivation”. This program was to start in July of 2020. Arguably, if the State of California printed or published an online hunting guide which listed the regulations for youth hunting, they themselves could be in violation of AB 2571. It’s often surprising to hear that many, even in the shooting world, do not know about or understand the functions of the Pittman-Robertson Act. In 1937, Senator Key Pittman from Nevada, and Congressman Absalom Willis Robertson of Virginia, sponsored a bill that imposed an 11% excise tax on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. The tax collected is then distributed to the state governments for wildlife projects. In 1950 the Dingell-Johnson Act mirrored the Pittman-Robertson Act but with a focus on fisheries.

With the inception of AB 2571, the revenue for conservation has already been impacted. Consider the amount of ammunition consumed by youth shooters just in the US Clay Target League alone across the State of California during the course of a year with a fall and a spring league. That would be just the tip of the iceberg. The shooting sports are a gateway into a lifestyle that links to many other outdoor pursuits. Those pursuits usually require the purchasing of equipment, which is taxed under both above-mentioned Acts, then is distributed to the States for conservation efforts. Without the American Sportsman, shooter, fisherman or archer; this revenue would never be realized. There is no telling what the state of our wildlife, forests, waters, and wild places would be without the brilliant forethought of conservation leaders like Senator Pittman and Congressman Robertson. With the fiscal challenges already faced by the State of California resulting from their proclivity for copious amounts of spending on progressive causes encompassing everything from health care to government funded and supervised illicit drug injection clinics, one must wonder where the lost revenue will be found. This writer’s intuition tells him it won’t, and wildlife conservation will suffer.

Many gun clubs have seen decreased participation over the years leading to decreased revenue and tough times. The various youth programs have rejuvenated these clubs, spurring

investment into everything from new Olympic style fields to clubhouses featuring dedicated classroom facilities for instruction. I can think of a couple of clubs in Michigan that currently wouldn’t exist if it were not for the success of these youth programs in Michigan. Many jurisdictions have imposed zoning limitations which essentially ban the development of new shooting facilities within their jurisdiction. If the existing clubs are not able to make it and new clubs cannot be built, the sport will die. The concern in California is significant for the sustainability of the clubs if this law stands. I’d submit, THAT is the intent.

THE ULTERIOR MOTIVE

The following analysis is not opinion or conjecture as the collateral impacts of this bill are clearly demonstrable. As has been the case with politicians since the beginning of human history, any opportunity to co-opt a cause which brings voters into a particular camp is well worth the effort, despite the morality, constitutionality, or actual effectiveness of said position. Such is the case with California AB 2571.

Despite being the hotbed for gun violence as a result of many factors (lack of mental health funding and treatment accessibility, illegal drug trade influence, heavy gang presence and weak state and federal prosecutorial action against illegal activities involving all of the above) and one of the most regulated states in the union as it pertains to firearms, many politicians in California continue to push a false narrative that more laws equal higher levels of public safety. This of course is demonstrably false and proven by the simplest of statistical analysis of the Uniform FBI Crime Report.

This bill has originated and exists solely to impede the ability of entities; engaging in the legal commerce in firearms, publishing, advertising and any peripherally connected organization, from operating within the State of California. In short, it’s the greatest example of bullying by a government in recent memory. This bullying is accompanied by the biggest gaslighting operation employed by political factions over the last fifty years, in the false narrative and blatantly skewed statistics used to support the anti-gun position. This, combined with the exploitation of the emotions of the firearm and statistics illiterate, in exchange for votes and political power, as well as the exploitation of tragedy and you have a dastardly concoction of lies which

appears to violate the tenants of the first, second, fifth and fourteenth amendments. The mechanism that makes this an unfortunate reality for the industry is the wide net that seems to include sales of everything from a t-shirt depicting Yosemite Sam to a magazine with an ad for a target shotgun, is the civil fine portion that could be as much as \$25,000.00 per incident, meaning per issue sent into the state. The wide latitude and frankly vague nature that the language provides to the court, makes it impossible to establish clear parameters for compliance. The entities concerned about this could and maybe would be likely to prevail in court action, but the ensuing legal bills would be massive. This reality has led to many simply deciding to pull out of the state altogether. THIS was the objective of the bill all along. California AB 2571 is nothing more than a vindictive attack on, not just an industry, but a lifestyle of hunters, shooters and sportsmen and women. The proponents of this bill know it will accomplish nothing in terms of reducing gun violence. They have never been serious about resolving these issues as demonstrated by their refusal to address the true causation. If this law was truly about protecting children from gun violence, mental health would be the first item on this list to deal with. Other topics for potential mitigation of gun violence among youth would evolve around adequate law enforcement, minimum mandatory enhancements of prison sentences and elimination of absurd plea bargains, the impact of violent video games marketed towards minors or maybe social media limitation of access for minors through an effective age verification process combined with rating appropriate limitation. This law is nothing more than an attack on a legitimate industry which exists in opposition to the political world view of a group of individuals who profit and acquire power through the perpetuation of a false narrative, at the expense of law-abiding citizens who are simply seeking life, liberty and are actively pursuing happiness through sport. One dirty little secret of those who would push adoption of this type of legislation is the desire to limit these activities to those with means. Afterall, if one has significant financial wherewithal, these limitations are meaningless. The unique thing about the United States that differs from the balance of the world is the availability of hunting and sport shooting to the common person. Millions of acres of public land, co-op style gun clubs and readily accessible

ammunition and firearms make it so that these pursuits are not limited to the wealthy, as is the case nearly everywhere else. The truth is, proponents of this kind of draconian law have no issue with their fellow elites taking part in these activities, because those people are not the “commoners”. This echoes of the past when killing the “King’s” deer to feed one’s family was a crime punishable by death, and hunting or sport shooting was reserved for the “nobles”.

WHY IT MATTERS

In addition to the above outlined impacts to conservation, the sustainability of the sport and the general pursuit of happiness for which this country declared independence from the King in the first place, American blood and treasure has been paid all over the globe to protect our way of life. From the first two divisions of Marines established by the Continental Congress on November 10th, 1775, to my grandfather and his three brothers who all served in war zones during World War II, to my son who deployed to Afghanistan with the 2nd Marine Division, this country has put its money where its mouth is in the name of liberty. While nefarious politicians conduct subversive operations with only control and power as the end goal, some of us believe in the founding values and live our lives by a code which serves to support and defend our national principles.

I regard Thomas Jefferson as the most impactful and brilliant mind to have participated in the founding of this country and establishment of its principles. He was simply unmatched in his understanding of sovereignty, the threats to



liberty and the potential for tyranny. Jefferson said, “Educate and inform the whole mass of the people... They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty”. Education is the primary motivating factor with the various youth programs, which are directly and immediately impacted by this law. One could ask, why would a state impose a law which impedes the ability of organizations to educate the public on the safe use of firearms? If you look to President Jefferson’s quote you will find their motivation. They intend to eliminate the education which goes with it, choosing instead to demonize an inanimate object, while playing on the emotions of the firearm-ignorant to consolidate power and raise revenue for political purposes. All motivations which run counter to our national principles. Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw said, “Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it”. When an individual blindly accepts a mantra, without applying deductive reasoning and conducting their own research, it amounts to intellectual laziness. Unfortunately, this modus operandi is not only present with a majority of the voters of California, but also with many of the policy makers.

There are multiple lawsuits that have been filed to stop this law on behalf of many organizations. LadyShooter LifeStyles will be following this process closely and will report back on any developments. ■

****It is vital to note that this article is in no way intended, nor is to be construed as legal advice. Anyone with questions on this law must seek answers from their legal counsel.****

How to Pick an Instructor

BY CRYSTAL DUKE | PHOTOS BY THADDIUS BEDFORD

Most people who purchase any type of gun realize they need some training to operate it safely and competently, but they are quickly overwhelmed by where to start, and with whom to start. Especially if they don't know anyone else to ask for a referral. So, how does one go about choosing an instructor?

BUT WHO?

First, don't be discouraged, there are lots of competent firearms instructors out there. Of course, there are some that shouldn't be teaching as well, so how do you sort it all out if you know nothing and no one? The firearms education industry has grown a lot and reflects the diverse faces of our country. There are women, minorities, older, younger, men, instructors as well as teaching teams, schools and more.

Your prospective instructor should possess certifications, reviews, a history of teaching, a range affiliation, good reputation, a website and/or Facebook page showing them instructing students, and more. Let's break each of these items down for clarification.

CERTIFICATIONS ARE NOT ALL EQUAL

Instructor certifications are issued by several accreditation agencies such as the NRA and USCCA. There are several others of note such as renowned rangemaster, Massad Ayoub and Active Self Protection. The NRA and USCCA are the major ones that certify a lot of instructors. Instructor certifications are different than certifications you can earn from many instructors offering their own curriculum. Certificates a student earns are



Certificates of Completion. Here we are strictly talking about instructor certifications. To earn an instructor certification, each candidate must take the basic course, then prove they can teach that course in an instructor version of said course. Part of that course is an instructor shooting qualification which is much more difficult than the student shooting version. Your instructor should have a certification for the discipline in which you are interested. Most instructor courses take between one and three days to complete. Some are structured differently over time but most take only a day or so to complete once a candidate has taken the pre-requisite course. Each discipline requires all these steps so an instructor with a lot of certifications has really put in a lot of time as a student.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Any instructor that has been teaching for a length of time should have reviews from their students. There is a place for reviews on websites and

business FB pages. Read the reviews for what the students found valuable with this particular instructor. Also look for the instructor's history of teaching. Pay close attention to past classes, current listed classes, how many classes listed on a site or portal like NRA or USCCA instructor portals, etcetera. Most instructors get much better over time but that doesn't mean someone new isn't amazingly capable. It should be noted that newer instructors should have lower pricing than an in-demand, seasoned instructor who gets a lot of business through referrals.



All instructors must teach somewhere. If they teach at a range, you might find business cards posted on the public board or maybe they work at the range and teach as a sideline. There are many different arrangements. Before I built my own private range, I taught at many different ranges in my area. Gun ranges and gun stores are a terrific source of recommendations and resources. They know nearly everyone in their community.

Your instructor should have a good reputation. If you see bad reviews consistently then you might want to think about another choice unless they have a specific skillset you are seeking. We can't make everyone happy all the time and every instructor experiences that nightmare student that leaves them a terrible review with little or no cause. One bad review is likely nothing to worry about.



An instructor who has been teaching a while should have some sort of digital presence whether a website or a Facebook page full of various things about firearms instruction and activities. A website can tell you nearly everything you want to know about them; their story, which certifications they hold, class offerings, and the type of clientele they serve based on photos of classes they post. It doesn't have to be a fancy, slick website as those cost a lot of money to have developed and maintain. However, there should be enough information on there to form a good first impression.

READY FOR SELECTION

When you find someone that passes all the criteria above in your area, give them a call. Have a conversation with them to gauge their

approachability. I certainly don't mind at all when a prospective student calls. It demonstrates their level of interest and that they are trying to make the best decision with their training dollars. Almost every instructor I know will also make a referral to an appropriate person if they don't have expertise in the area the prospective student is looking for or if logistical challenges are present. For example, I'm part of a national women's shooting league and have a terrific network across the country. If someone calls me out of my area, I can give them a great place to start.

You've bought a gun and need training, so you've got to start somewhere. The gun community is very welcoming to new shooters and people wanting to gain new skills. Don't be afraid to take classes from different instructors. People explain things in different ways, and it helps to



drills, demonstrations, help cement what you just learned in person and general education about firearms, there is a major drawback to relying solely on this type of education. There is NO substitute for a live person with eyes on you and what you are doing. Many people develop bad habits with online education when trying to replicate a certain drill or skill they saw on the internet. Nothing is worth compromising safety when it comes to your new firearm. People often don't realize they are "muzzling" themselves with their own gun because they've never taken a private lesson or in-person class and had eyeballs on them and their technique. I once had a prospective student call me about booking a lesson. They asked what I charge per hour. It wasn't a tremendous amount of money and was less than I currently charge. This individual proceeded to tell me, "Oh, I can't afford that, I will just go watch a million YouTube videos." They had just purchased a new gun and felt that an in-person lesson costs too much. How confident would you be in their safe gun handling skills when shooting next to them at the range? Please don't be this person. On-line learning is a very valuable addition to in-person training when used in conjunction with live training. But it is not a complete substitute for in-person training.

Seek out regular consistent in-person training and practice what you learn. Then you can reward yourself with a new class and skill set with an awesome instructor. ■

VIRTUAL TRAINING

Some choose on-line instruction as opposed to in-person instruction. While on-line instruction can be very valuable to introduce concepts, talk about

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STRENGTH TRAIN *to be a* *Better* ——— *Shooter*

BY DR. GINA SIRCHIO-LOTUS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
THADDIUS BEDFORD AND MATTHEW GAY

Will getting stronger make you a better shooter? It's pretty likely. Yes, I have seen the very good shooter that appears to be not at their fighting weight - so to speak. The excellent shooter putting up great scores that appears to be lacking fitness or appears to be overweight. This doesn't mean that particular shooter wouldn't improve if she or he had more strength. It also is important to know that 'fitness' doesn't have a look.

A definite level of strength is needed for shooters. Holding the gun, focusing and standing for sometimes a few hours a day, walking fields and carrying gear can all add up. It is not a very fun day if the shooting starts out great and then diminishes simply because raising the gun became exhaustive.

Walking up to any shooting event, there are a lot of similarities to arriving at a triathlon. There is specialized gear of varying costs, the latest "gotta-have-it gadgets", folks discussing their greatest moments and failures, dissecting techniques of the sport, and snacks. Most sports require training for the skill and technique of the sport, but then also the endurance and strength for the sport. People that want to excel at golf, soccer, skiing, biking and shooting should be no different.

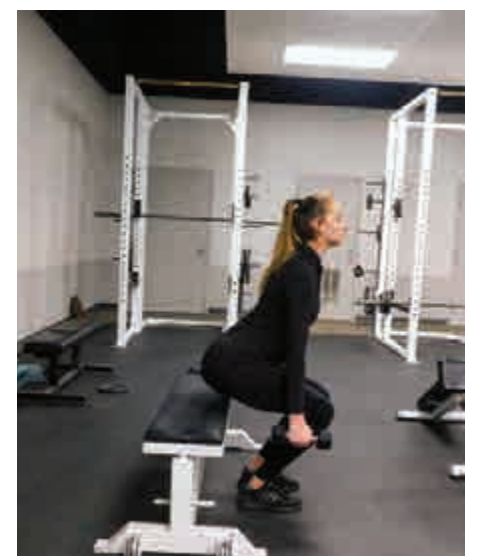
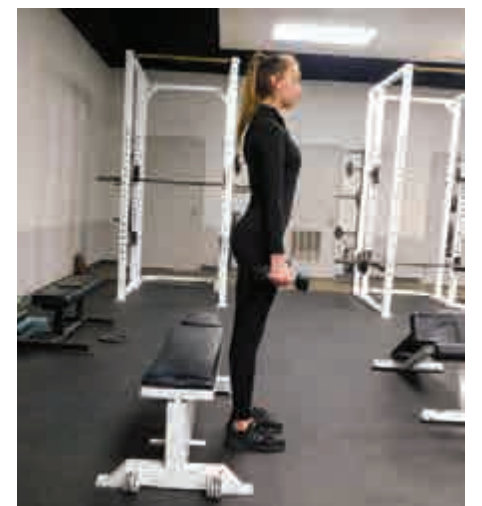
To improve one's shooting, there is practice time to dial in on the skills; proper stance, making sure the gun is best fit, good hearing protection (ask me about Soundgear), tracking properly and timing. But, in addition, there also needs to be time spent for improving endurance as well as strength. Good endurance might seem unnecessary. Perhaps you are envisioning the numerous carts and trucks taking people from station to station and from the BBQ to the trailer... and then wondering why jogging or swimming could matter. However, it is physical endurance that also allows for mental endurance, to keep the brain alert and eyes focusing after hours of being outside. Good endurance also improves performance while tolerating high heat and a beating sun, or the shivering cold and blustery winds. Working on cardio endurance happens to come along with some decent health benefits as well. It will be difficult to find a doctor that doesn't agree with a plan to improve cardiopulmonary health.



Here are a few quick start tips to improve your shooting sports performance from the fitness corner.

1. Walk/jog/swim/bike for 30 minutes continuously- 4 days a week. Pick the activity you prefer, and then go for it. The idea is to choose a decent pace and then do not stop until the 30 minutes is up. The effort level should be that you could have a slightly choppy conversation. Easy chat? Pick up the pace! Gasping and sucking wind? Take it down a notch. This can be a great time to listen to music or a podcast if you need some distraction.

2. Strength Training- there are many people who are not comfortable in a gym. They feel they do not belong or are worried they are being looked at. They may not know where the equipment is or how to use it properly. For people new to a gym, it is a great idea to start out with a few sessions with a trainer. Do not simply listen, give them a list of your specific goals. Asking for help with improving physical endurance, upper body strength and good balance would be a great first list of requests. This also gives you time to acclimate to the space, learn where everything is, and plan your own workouts comfortably. If you have home equipment, there are many great online resources to build a home workout to help improve on your fitness goals. Machines, dumbbells, barbells and resistance bands can all be used to help build strength.



3. Address mobility. Too often people think the word flexible is only anointed to the yogis, but good joint mobility allows us each to move well, safely and without injury. Poor thoracic spine mobility and poor shoulder stability make pain and injuries all too easy. Warm up with some spine and shoulder stretches, a few deep squats and prepare the body to move.

4. Tune in to what fatigues you. Is it that your arms get tired? Do you simply get tired over all and need to sit for a bit? Is your body feeling ok, but you need to work hard to keep your brain focused?

5. Address your nutrition. This will be the topic focus of an upcoming article, however, here are a few things to always check. Stay hydrated with water. All too often, everyone meets up early over a cup of coffee, and hours pass before anything else is taken in. Toss a water bottle in your gear bag. Lack of hydration gives brain fog. Keep your blood sugar balanced. For

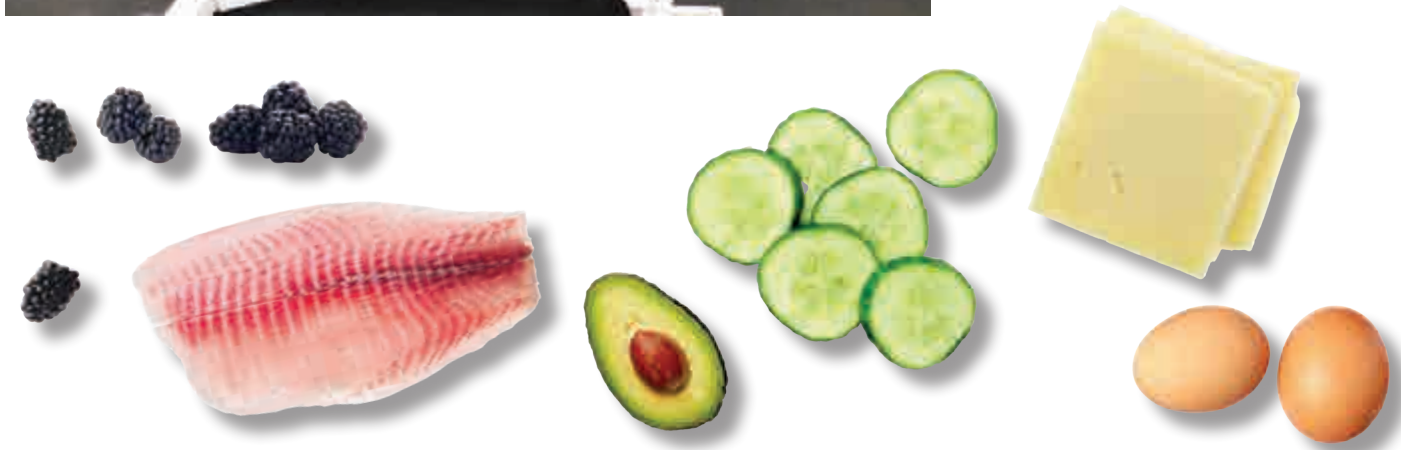


some, this means taking along some small snacks. Trail mix, fruit, meat jerky, high protein granola bars and hard-boiled eggs can all travel well and

be tucked easily in a pocket.

Last but not least, remember that building strength not only helps the actual sport performance, but also keeps you healthy in your life outside of sport. For folks looking forward to many years of enjoying shooting with friends, competing and improving; adding in some strength training is the way to go. ■

Editor's Note: Dr. Gina Sirchio-Lotus is a functional medicine provider and board-certified clinical nutritionist located just outside of Chicago, IL. She has been in private practice for over 16 years and lectures frequently on health for sports performance, endurance, women's health and autoimmune issues. She is also the owner of Electronic Hearing Protection, Inc that provides Soundgear electronic hearing protection.



Youth Training

The Non-Traditional Sport

BY BRANDY ELROD

When you think of youth sports: football, basketball, baseball, and softball are the first sports that you most likely think of.

Has shotgun, rifle, pistol, or archery ever crossed your mind as the main sport your child competes in? This world did not exist on such a large scale when I was growing up in the 90s and early 2000s. The youth shooting sports movement is growing rapidly across the United States, as more parents realize the different disciplines are not only safe but also a skill that their children can use past their parochial upbringing. The majority of children, once they graduate from high school, leave their beloved sports behind as they move off to college or start a career. However, children involved in shooting sports do not need a college or professional team to continue competing. There are numerous organizations that you can get your children involved in across the United States to get them started in youth shooting sports.

4-H SHOOTING AND CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

The most widely known organization is 4-H. 4-H is a U.S.-based network of youth organizations whose mission is, “engaging youth to reach their fullest potential while advancing the field of youth development.” 4-H was founded in 1902 in Ohio and currently has over 6,000,000 youth members. Currently there are 500,000 participating in youth shooting sports across all 50 states, with shooting sports being conducted under the Natural Resources sector of 4-H. 4-H offers seven different shooting sport disciplines: pistol, rifle, shotgun, hunting and wildlife, muzzleloader, archery, and western heritage. Pistol includes: .22, .32 and .45 caliber pistol and revolver, as well as air bullseye and silhouette air pistol. Rifle includes: BB gun, air rifle silhouette, sporter air rifle, precision air rifle, running target air rifle, light rifle, 3 position smallbore rifle, CMP smallbore rifle, and high power sporter rifle. Shotgun includes: sporting clays, Supersport, 5-stand, American trap, American skeet, doubles trap, doubles skeet, International trap, international skeet, modified trap, and Whiz-bang (Texas only). Muzzleloading offers both pistol and rifle. Muzzleloading rifle includes 25-yard bottles and critters, 50-yard bullseye, and rifle silhouette. Muzzleloading pistol includes 25-yard pistol, cap and ball pistol, as well as muzzleloading trap. Archery provides youth with several options for bow categories which include: Genesis (NASP), Recurve, Compound aided, Compound unaided, and



barebow. The youth participate in indoor & outdoor archery events that include: 20-yard, field, 3D, Mod 600, clout, and wand.

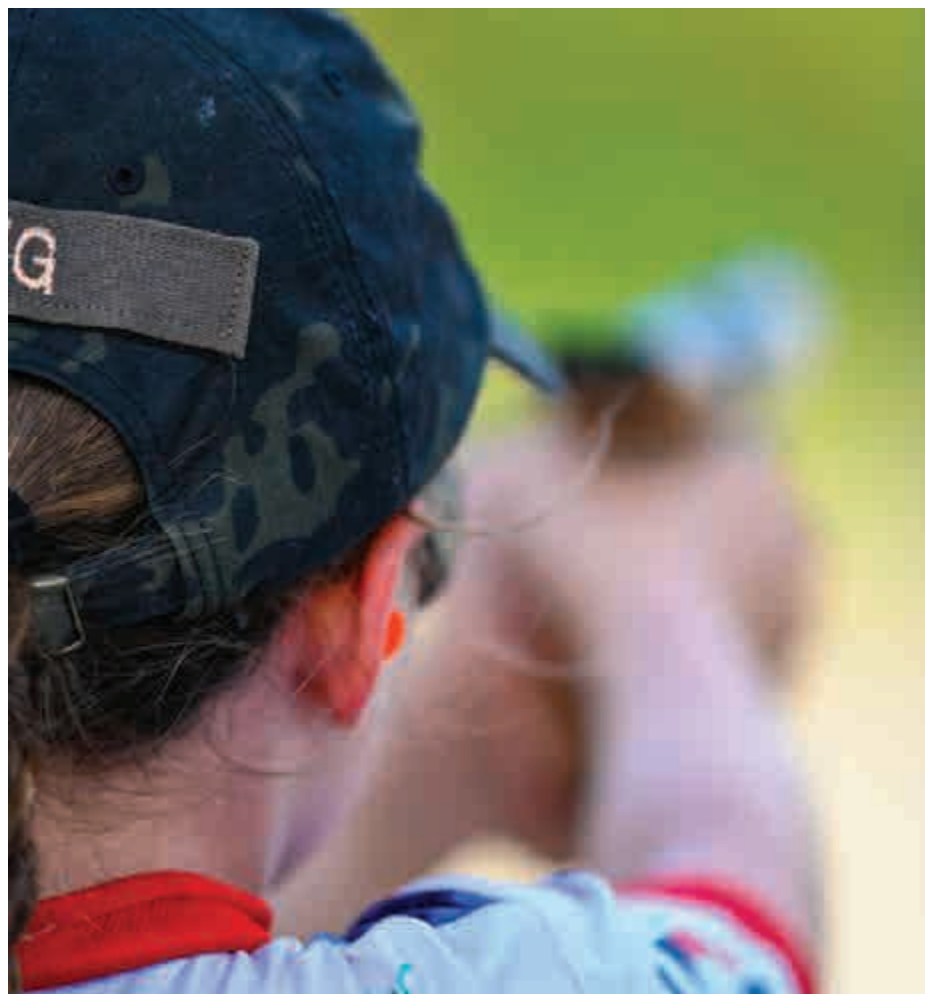
Hunting and Wildlife is a very unique event that tests the hunting and wildlife knowledge of youth, as well as their shooting skills in archery, shotgun, muzzleloading, and smallbore rifle. Western Heritage is similar to the Hunting & Wildlife discipline. Participants must have knowledge of western heritage, while they take on the persona of an individual from the early days of the old west by dressing in period correct attire and carrying period correct equipment. Participants perform pistol and rifle skills. Per the 4-H Western Heritage manual the following firearms are recommended. For historical purposes, reproductions of the 1860 Henry Rifle, Winchester models 1866, 1873, and 1892, Spencer Rifles, Marlin Models 1894 and 1895,

and Colt Lighting Models (pump action) are recommended. Historic reproductions of the Colt Conversion Models (cap and ball firearms modified to fire metallic cartridges), Colt 1872 Open Top Models, 1873 Colt Single Action Army styles, Colt Bisley, 1875 Remington, Smith and Wesson American, and the Smith and Wesson Russian are recommended. If your child is interested in 4-H youth shooting sports contact your local extension office or state shootings sports coordinator at the following link: <https://4-hshootingsports.org/your-state/>.

SCTP AND SASP

The Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation (SSSF) is responsible for all aspects of the Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) and Scholastic Action Shooting Program (SASP)





across the United States. SCTP provides kids from elementary through high school and college with the opportunity to participate in the fun and challenging sports of American trap, American skeet, 5-Stand, Supersport, and sporting clays, as well as the Olympic disciplines of International trap and International skeet. SCTP is the official feeder program to USA Shooting and a path to the U.S. Olympic Shooting Team. The Scholastic Action Shooting Program provides student athletes aged elementary through college the ability to compete in pistol and rifle speed



shooting. The Pistol events include: Rimfire Iron Sight, Rimfire Optic, Centerfire Iron Sight, Centerfire Optic and 1911. The Rifle events include: Rimfire Iron Sight, Rimfire Optic Sight and Pistol Caliber Carbine (PCC). If your child is interested in SCTP or SASP you can find a local team by visiting the SSSF website at sssfonline.org

GET YOUR ZEN ON WITH ARCHERY

There are many other organizations available for your children. The National Archery in Schools Program (NASP), is a public and private school-based organization. NASP uses Genesis bows, Easton arrows, and 80cm targets at 10 and 15 meters, shot indoors. The concept is based on the principle that each child is given the same inexpensive equipment and the difference lies in the skill and work ethic of the child. NASP is a great opener to the world of USA Archery. To find out more about NASP please visit naspschools.org

The National Skeet Shooting Association (NSSA) and the National Sporting Clays Association (NSCA) allow youth to participate in the sub-junior and junior age categories in skeet and sporting clays. The great part about these organizations is that you can compete with your children in the same events. Please visit nssa-nsca.org to learn more about the NSCA and NSSA and how your child can become involved.



If you are interested in your child being involved with the Olympic disciplines of International trap & skeet, USA Shooting (usashooting.org) has youth development categories.

Each state has their own youth shooting programs, contact your state Wildlife department for information on what your state has to offer. National organizations such as the American Legion, the Boy Scouts of America, and the National Rifle Association offer junior shooting programs. If you are looking for a safe, non-

traditional sport, where your child has the potential to earn college scholarships, learn a life-long skill that can involve the entire family, then youth shooting sports is your best option. ■



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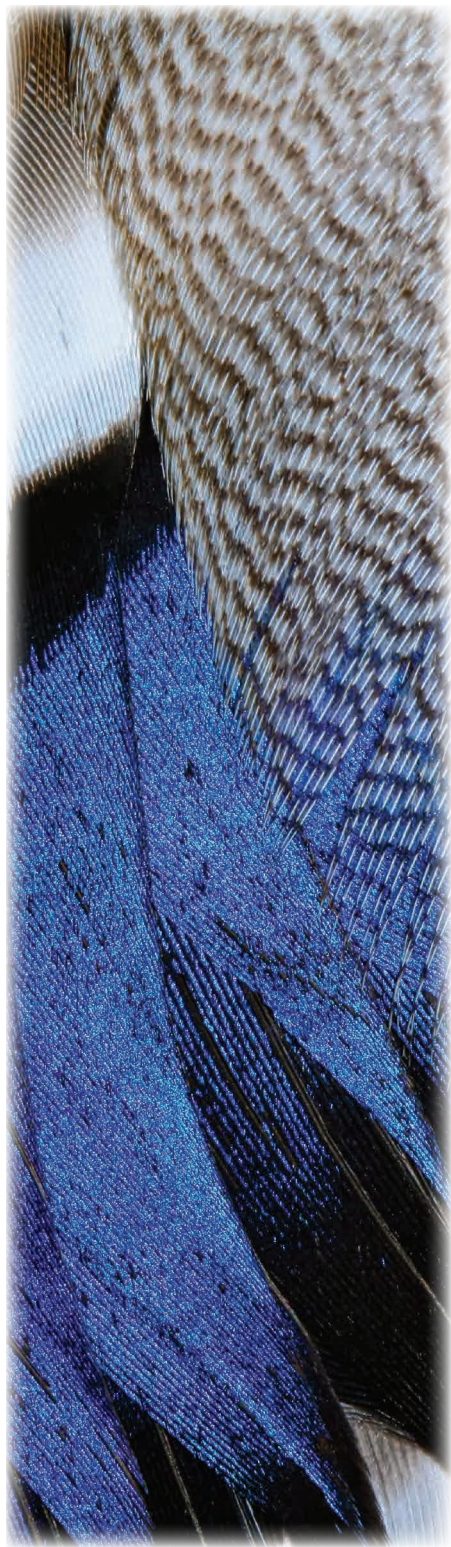
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INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Briley	7
Federal Preium	Cover 2,3
Gray's Shotgun Cache	36
Mattarelli USA	56
National Shooting Sports Fdn (NSSF)	37
Passionate Outlaws	65
Southern Charm Firearms Academy	74
SyrenUSA	51
The Sporting Life	57



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