

LOCAL HEROES:



PHOTO CREDIT: JOHN KANE



PHOTO CREDIT: JOHN KANE

Pint-sized Ponytailed Powerhouses

BY DEE ORR

This feature has been excerpted from the original article published in the Jul/Aug 19 issue of ClayShootingUSA magazine.

The Sub Juniors are coming, the Sub Juniors are coming! Hide your patches and stow away your egos. These kids are kicking butt. Just look at Haylyn Hanks in the Ladies division and Joe Fanizzi tearing up the Open division. They are amazing, both would have been first team All American if not for the fact that they led their age concurrents and that position of Captain overrode their respective first team positions. The fact that a young woman is Captain of the Sub

Junior team just goes to show you we don't need a Ladies tee in this sport. These Pint-sized Ponytailed Powerhouses are just coming to the forefront, but there are many more out there charging the front lines. Opportunities today for young women in shooting clays are unprecedented, with SCTP and 4-H programs popping up all over the country. These kids are taking those opportunities by the reins and doing magical things. The sky is the limit for them – and it is wonderful to watch.

KAYLA KANE TEXAS, AGE 14

I met Kayla and her father John at the 2018 FITASC Grand Prix held at South Florida Shooting Club. We were squadded together and I fell completely in love with the two of them and quickly became her biggest cheerleader. She has come a long way since then.

Going to the gun club with her Dad when she was around 9 years old spurred her interest in the sport. It wasn't long before she

joined in with a 28 gauge semi-auto. She now shoots a Fabarm Syren XLR5 semi-auto and during the 2018 Nationals she joined the Syren Pro Staff family. I gave her a Syren Visor to match her gun when we met at the 2018 Krieghoff Cup, which I understand she has since shot up, after running not one, but two 5-stand layouts at this year's Browning Briley! She also claimed two other Ladies titles at that event and several podium finishes at the Arizona Open. During this year's Western



KAYLA KANE

Regional at Coyote Springs, she ran two more 5-Stand layouts and had enough punches to reach AA. To give you an idea of the quickness of her rise, she started 2018 in D class.

Her home clubs are Capital City and the Williamson County 4-H. Practice takes place two to three times per week, where she works on shots she struggled with at the last tournament. She pushes herself to break four pairs in a row to reinforce her focus. Kayla practices with an Improved Modified choke but opens up to a Müller U2 for tournaments, using 1oz. 1250 – 1300 fps loads. Instruction has come from several different coaches, but her “go to” is Trevor Jensen of the Gebben Miles Shooting Academy.

Dad John is her travel and

shooting companion and mother Laura and sister Riley support from home in Austin, Texas. Their goal is to attend registered shoots twice per month and more just before big events. She is in the 8th grade and enjoys lacrosse and playing the mandolin. I have heard her play – and she is very good! As with many I interview in the youth shooting community, it is the people and friendships that have enriched her life the most. Her most satisfying accomplishment to date was at the 2018 Texas State Championships, where she claimed the top Lady position with a very impressive 89 in FITASC over some big name competition.

Kayla says “If you are on the fence about shooting NSCA, I highly suggest you come and try. The beauty of this sport is that it

doesn’t matter if you are a kid or a girl or where you are from. Anyone has a shot at winning on any day.”

GIANNA SANTO VERMONT, AGE 15

I met Gianna at this year’s Gator Cup where we were squadded together in one of the prelims. I love to random squad because I get to meet so many shooters. She was with her dad Bud, who is her regular squad mate and “accomplice” in the game of clays. We had a ball and I was sure she would be one of my subjects for this series.

Although she began shooting at 5 years of age, it wasn’t until five years later that her Dad brought her out to try sporting clays. She

began with a 28 gauge auto and progressed through a 20 gauge and then a 12 gauge auto, before settling this year into a 12 gauge Caesar Guerini Syren Tempio O/U. She too, just this April, has become a part of the Syren Pro Staff family. She loves the feel and balance of her new gun, shoots Light Modified over Light Modified and rarely changes. Fiocchi 1oz. 1200 fps are her shell of choice. Cole Fine Guns handles her gun fit and service.

Practice for Gianna consists of “easy birds” repeated many times in a row before moving to harder and longer targets. This way her practice gives her confidence in anything she encounters on the course at tournament time. Her home club is Northeast Kingdom Skeet and Sporting Clays. She also

GIANNA SANTO



PHOTO CREDIT: JOHN KANE

has the luxury of practicing at home. She learned from Frank DeLuca, Jr. and Bill McGuire, but has now settled in at the AIM Shooting School with Anthony I. Matarese, Jr. and Diane Sorantino, whose shooting techniques she feels suit her well. Her most satisfying accomplishment was shooting her best score to date, a 94, to take runner-up in the prelim at the Easter Extravaganza at Scarborough Fish and Game in Maine. She dominated both Sub Junior and Ladies and came in AA2 in the Main Event, AA1 in Super Sporting and AA1 in 20 gauge, earning her a total of eight punches and a Master class pin.

With dad on the course and mom Karen and brother Hunter both rooting her on, her support system is wide. Shooting is her

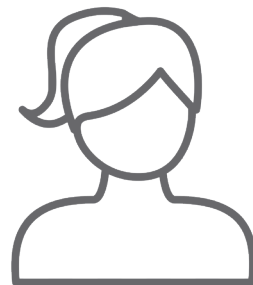
passion, but horses are a close second, coming in just a nose behind. She also imbibes in all the awesome winter sports that life in northern Vermont has to offer.

Gianna says "Sporting clays has taught me many things, but especially discipline and direction. It has made me realize what my goals are." She recommends that new shooters should just have fun with it. Perhaps a career in this industry is a part of her future.

Time for Girls to Shine

It's a new day. No longer are these young women expected to bake cookies and cheer for their brothers. They now realize they can also excel in the shooting

sports, if they so desire. Kayla and Gianna made great showings at the U.S. Open at M&M and Gianna went to the Hardy Classic and dominated the Ladies division with a 173, putting her 20 targets ahead of the next lady. These young ladies have so much in common – all three share a recipe for success: parental support, good instruction and mostly, an unwavering will to succeed and be the best they can be. Reach for the stars, ladies! ■



No longer are these young women expected to bake cookies and cheer for their brothers.