

Musings of the Rookie

Sharing the Journey

When I was about 13, for some reason I would think about girls. As a matter of fact, at 13 it's just possible I was over-thinking girls. What should I wear to impress girls? What should I say to a girl that might get a smile? What should I do when I open my mouth and no words want to come out? Do those things advertised in the back of comic books really make you 6 inches taller? If only I could make the football team.

Now I'm Over 13 By a lot! My girl fixation has settled in on one very special lady, but I'm pretty sure I still have a tendency to over think things. What should I wear for sporting clays? What should I say when someone offers or asks for advice. (The thing about opening my mouth with no words hasn't happened in about 30 years – got that one beat.) Do those chokes advertised in the back of shooting magazines really add 5 birds to your score? I need to get better endurance for those 400 bird shoots. Is it too late to try out for the football team?

Another favorite childhood influence was Samuel Clemens – or Mark Twain as most knew him. (Are you enjoying the blank stare on your kid's face?) Now he wasn't much help with dealing with girls – unless you wanted the fence whitewashed and we (now) know, most girls aren't that gullible. He did offer some advice though that I didn't pick up on till much later. He said "It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so."

Now, I read a lot about sporting clays, and it became clear that I really needed a fancy gun, high velocity maximum loads, \$1000 shooting glasses, a full set of gold plated chokes and – oh yeah – porting. Lots of barrel porting, if I was ever going to figure out this game. I knew it for sure, but it just wasn't so. Mr. Twain was right. The same applies to information from others.

On the rare occasion I miss a bird <smirk>; well meaning, free advice just comes bubbling out of the trees. It may be guys on my squad. It may be someone just walking by and sometimes it just seems to come out of the clouds when no one is there. “You were behind it! Your face came off the stock! There’s a hole in your pattern! Barrel is too short for those long shots! You need Josh Day’s reflexes to catch that bird.” Half of what they say is probably right but the other half they “know for sure but it just ain’t so”.

Mr. Twain suggested those things get you in trouble. I believe he might have agreed that a little trouble is not always a bad thing. I know that fancy shotgun is not going to improve my scores much – but there is a degree of pride and confidence when I bring it out that can’t hurt.

I look forward to the camaraderie and the chitchat including the advice. . I just acknowledge it and file it away for later consideration. Right now, I have a pair to break and that takes 100% concentration. Did she just wink at me?

**Rob Ridley
Rookie**