

GEBBEN

TALENT, FAITH, HARD WORK AND A NEW GUN

MILES

IN CONVERSATION WITH AL HAGUE

I FIRST MET GEBBEN MILES DURING THE US WESTERN OPEN AT THE TOP GUN CLUB IN THE SUMMER OF 2009. I QUICKLY BECAME AWARE OF HIS COMMITMENT TO THE SPORT AND WAS IMPRESSED THAT HE WAS SO OPEN AND CORDIAL AND WILLING TO SPARE HIS TIME WITH ME.

Though his ability was clear to all, little did I think that four months later he would be crowned 2009 National Sporting Clays Champion.

Background

Gebben turned 25 in September of this year and completed his education at the University of Arizona in December of 2007 and currently makes his home in Tucson. His introduction to shooting began while quail hunting with his Dad at the age of five. At the age of twelve he began shooting clays with significant success for his age group. He attained Master class status at the age of 15 during his fourth season and is an eleven time All American.

■ **AH:** The obvious first question. How does it feel to be the 2009 NSCA National Champion?

■ **GM:** Driving back from the event, my Dad and I talked about the last thirteen years and all that has happened to get us to this point. We talked about all the hard work and agreed that considering many things, it was probably best I had not won earlier since now I'm

better prepared to win and certainly at a better place in my faith and life. The simple answer is – it feels great to achieve a goal but I also give the glory of winning to my savior and thank him every day for his gifts.

■ **AH:** Tell us about your training.

■ **GM:** Since I was young, shooting seemed to come natural to me. I won my share of events at different levels but in 2004 Steve Schultz became my one and only coach. We worked hard on my pre-shot routine and to never deviate from it. We worked on mechanics and what we call tools in our toolbox. We worked on the mental side to help me learn to focus. As a result, I improved consistently and gradually moved up in ranking and class. Shortly before the Nationals, I changed my attitude and for the first time I looked at shooting as a profession and began to work accordingly.

A huge part of my preparation was a strengthening program developed by Shawn Farria, a friend, at the University of Arizona. He had called me one day and said



he thought he could give me a regimen that would work on the muscle groups used in shooting. I've used his program over a period of time and it was very helpful. I didn't experience any fatigue during the Nationals in my upper body whatsoever – I derived a lot of confidence from that.

AH: Five weeks before the Nationals you changed guns. How did you manage to get so comfortable with a new gun and shoot at this level in so short a time?

GM: In August, at the Grand in Sparta, I met with Dieter Krieghoff and established a relationship that led to Krieghoff sponsoring me. They let me try several models and we came up with what I thought could work for me. When the gun arrived I discovered they had put a parallel comb stock on it – and I had always shot a drop stock. At the Arizona State shoot I shot a 77 and was a bit panicked about the new gun. Clearly I had some serious work to do, so before the Nationals I shot practice 30 of the 33 days, working on my pre-shot routine and all facets of my shooting mechanics. The gun swings very well for me and it obviously fits perfectly. As it turns out, I love the new stock style and I'm more than pleased with the gun and my Krieghoff sponsorship.

AH: How do you motivate yourself?

GM: I am part of Athletes In Action, a ministry that teaches how to incorporate faith in sports – all sports, not just shooting. I use my faith to motivate myself before and during the event. I have a Bible verse I repeat to myself before every shot – it truly helps me focus and takes the focus off myself and puts it on the task.

AH: What is your least favorite target presentation?

GM: I seem to struggle most with incoming targets, but honestly, I enjoy them all.

AH: Is there one target that you missed in the National's Main Event that if you had hit, would have kept you out of a shoot-off and given you the outright win?

GM: Not really, because I left several out there – particularly on the Green course. However, I did miss two short shots that I was shocked by. Looking back, I'm glad the shoot-off was necessary. I think it had more impact and created more excitement at the end of the event. I enjoyed the journey – and it gave me another opportunity to focus on my faith and not on myself.

AH: Many top performers in many sports speak of being in the zone when they are successful. Do you believe in the zone theory, and did you experience anything like that at the Nationals?

GM: I am sure that it's a real concept for some, but for me my sport is a form of worship. It's an opportunity to give the credit for my success to my Lord and Savior. I find that when I put my trust and faith in him, I'm able to succeed at whatever level he has planned for me. I am competitive, of course, but my trust in Him is complete and I'm thankful for his gifts – I guess you could say that's my zone.

AH: What new opportunities have presented themselves since your victory?

GM: I've received various invitations to speak at faith based gatherings and organizations which I am looking forward to. I have been contacted by NASCAR to attend the Daytona 500 and talk with many of the drivers who also enjoy shooting sports. Additionally, I have had inquiries

2009 ACCOMPLISHMENTS	
NCSA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS	MAIN EVENT CHAMPION
WESTERN OPEN	3RD
US OPEN MAIN EVENT T-3 AND PRELIM	3RD
MASTERS CUP	M2
ZONE 7	RUNNER UP
TARGET LINE OPEN	M1
11 TIME	ALL AMERICAN
5 TIME	TEAM USA SPORTING
3 TIME	TEAM USA FITASC

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from various ministries that have an interest in my participation. **AH:** Would you or have you considered other shooting disciplines in addition to

sporting clays – specifically, Olympic disciplines?

GM: I have been interested in skeet, but honestly, I'm not sure yet if the road to the Olympics would suit my life and what I feel is right for me.

AH: Tell us about your plans for the future. What's next?

GM: My next big event is The 2010 Seminole Cup. Then I will be running the Arizona Open here in Tucson in February as my dad has another commitment and will not be able to be there. Beyond that I hope to stay involved with Athletes in Action and take advantage of other opportunities that are open to me in all areas of my life.

Clearly, Gebben Miles is a young man of great faith and purpose. He is sincere in his beliefs and when you talk to him about his sport he has a joy about what he does that is instantly palpable. His plans for the future are his – and he is not willing to chart a course that does not follow his faith. Whether you share his beliefs or not, if you spend time with Gebben, you will fully understand and appreciate the depth of his convictions and his passion for his sport. There is no doubt he has a bright future in this sport, or whatever endeavor he chooses. I am sure we will be writing about this talented and dedicated young man for many years to come. ■