



# Ashleigh

# HAFLEY

**NAME:** ASHLEIGH HAFLEY

**AGE:** 18

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 7/23/1987

**HEIGHT:** 5' 7"

**WEIGHT:** THAT'S A HECK OF A THING TO ASK A GIRL WITH A GUN!

**GUN:** KEMEN KM4 WITH 32" BARRELS

**CARTRIDGES:** REMINGTON NITRO

**STARTED SHOOTING:** 1998

Welcome to Master class! Your achievements in the last 18 months have been awesome – particularly your Ladies HOA at the recent NSCA Nationals Main Event and Compak. Tell us first, how you got started in shooting.

■ I'm sure I started the same way as a lot of kids – my Dad was looking for a hunting partner and I had always shown an interest in shooting and being outdoors, so I immediately went to the head of the line. My first few outings were intense to say the least, and I quickly lost interest. After that I stayed away from everything to do with shooting for about a year.

During that time period, Dad had started shooting sporting clays and thought it might be a good way to reintroduce me to the sport. I went along a few times – just to score and watch – and then decided to give it another try. The second time around Dad made sure things were done a little different. He took the time to find a Remington Special Field 20 gauge. He also purchased a youth stock for it, and then he made modifications to the stock so it would fit. He cut the comb and made a kit to raise the comb to fit my face. Good gun fit and a 21-inch barrel made it easy to handle and light on recoil. After that we started shooting at the local Izaak Walton League – and three months later I competed in my first event and have been shooting ever since.

**Obviously your father, Mike, was a great influence early on, but when and what commitment did you have to make to practice and coaching before you became competitive?**

■ When I first got started I really didn't have a set practice routine. We would shoot skeet three days a week and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons we would shoot local courses. Between Dad and Ron Lee, I was able to get off to a solid start. Ron had been shooting skeet and sporting clays for a number of years and had helped Dad get started. I was able to get help from both of them, which was a tremendous benefit in those early days.

After I had the basics down and before I had picked up any bad habits, I took instruction with Marty Fischer. He would come in a few times a year and was instrumental in shoring up my fundamentals along with teaching me the various methods of shooting. Marty had given me practice routines but my level of desire at that time was not

as great as it is today. I realize now that I lost a lot of valuable time in the beginning by not taking advantage of practice time.

I started with my current instructor, Wendell Cherry, about two and a half years ago. I also started my first real practice routine after my first lesson with him.

I can during the course of a week. I sometimes add a third or fourth trap so distances and target presentations can be changed depending on what I want to work on in a session. I feel this grid work has been instrumental in my recent success. Had I known how beneficial practice is, I would have put it in place much earlier.

taken on the task of math teacher and has helped me through Algebra, Algebra II and Geometry. Everything between school and practice has to be balanced and both have to be done. This is one of the reasons I stopped playing softball to work on my shooting – trying to juggle three things was too much and it seemed one of the three always suffered.

the ballpark. On the rare occasion when nothing is going on we try to make as much family time together as we can.

We know that it takes a huge commitment by both Mom and Dad but they continue to make sacrifices so all three of us can compete in sports that we love.



**MY SCHOOL REALIZES THAT THIS IS SOMETHING THAT MEANS A LOT TO ME SO THEY ALLOW TIME OFF FOR TOURNAMENTS AS LONG AS MY GRADES DON'T SLIP. I TRY TO GET MOST OF MY HOMEWORK DONE IN CLASS — THAT WAY I HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO PRACTICE IN THE EVENINGS....**

For me it is a simple and effective routine. I practice on a skeet field working off one trap at a time. When I am working on the high house target I start just off of station eight and work my way towards station five. When I am working on the low house target I start just off of station eight and work my way towards station two. I shoot ten targets at the first spot. Every time I break 10 in a row I move a few paces backwards until I reach station five or two depending on which house I am working on. As I move back, any time I miss a target I move all of the way back to the first location and start all over again!

This allows me to work on what Wendell refers to as the “move”, which is a slow repeatable mount and shot. The other benefit to this routine is that it introduces pressure in not wanting to miss any targets and have to start over again. I still run this grid as many times as

**How did you manage to fit in such a commitment with your ongoing education?**

■ It gets to be a circus sometimes trying to find the time needed for school, practice and homework – then, on top of all that, I still need to find time for tournaments. My school understands and they realize that this is something that means a lot to me so they allow me the time off for tournaments as long as my grades don't slip. I try to get most of my homework done in class – that way I have plenty of time to practice in the evenings. But it always seems like something pops up which requires me to stay up a little later than usual or skip an hour of practice.

During the school year on Tuesday and Wednesday you will find me in the skeet house working on homework between rounds! One of the regulars at the club has

**With the commitment and time you have given to the sport, and the ongoing traveling to compete, would you consider that there is a downside to your personal and family life?**

■ During the summer it gets pretty hectic around the house, our plans for travel on the weekends start on Monday and are worked on all week long! I have two sisters that are still at home – Sarah is sixteen and Rachel just turned eight. Both of them are as wrapped up in softball as I am shooting. My Mom does most of the travel when it comes to softball and Dad takes care of shooting. Occasionally, Sarah or Rachel will be playing ball in the same direction we are traveling – so we stop, watch all of the games, and then head off from the ballpark to the shoot. If we are not at a shoot and they are playing ball then all of our time is spent at

**So what was it that attracted you to sporting clays rather than skeet or trap?**

■ Variety! No matter what club you're at with trap and skeet the targets are always the same. Whether you are shooting skeet on the East Coast or the West Coast a two high is always going to be doing basically the same thing. The same holds true for a 16-yard trap target – it will be the same on any trap field across the US.

With sporting clays the variety is endless. You not only get different specialty targets but you never know what each target setter has in mind. Target setters have their own little quirks and styles that keep you in the game and focused. Jon Kruger will normally throw you the hardest target of a report pair first so you don't get to shoot the easy target twice if you miss it. Bill McGuire will always set a few

stations where the targets cross to try and draw your focus away. Marty Fischer is known for his transitioning targets – and the list goes on and on. It forces you to read the targets and try and figure out what they are doing. When you analyze the game of sporting clays, it comes down to a one on one match where it is just you against the target setter. How well you read the targets and move the gun determines the outcome. This is what makes the game so enjoyable and challenging to me.

**When and how did you start shooting FITASC and how do you rate the comparison with sporting clays?**

■ I shot FITASC at our State shoot at Quail Ridge three years ago. I didn't know much about it, but decided to give it a try. I have shot it several times since and the longer more technical targets make the game enjoyable – those are the type of targets that I normally do really well with. I think the only real drawback for me is the pace, with the slower pace I am not sure my focus is as good as it is on a sporting course. I guess my FITASC shooting is work in progress. Right now I am trying to figure out a way not to let the pace dictate the level of my ability. I'm working on a few things to put me more at ease with the game. I have plans to shoot more events next year with some of them being All-American qualifiers. I know I will have to be able to do well in both FITASC and sporting to succeed in this sport.

**Any future aspirations to try the Olympic disciplines?**

■ I've thought about it several times, but right now I have a few more goals to accomplish in sporting clays. I have never shot any of the Olympic disciplines, but I hope to at least try them next year and see if it is something that

would be enjoyable and something that I think I can be competitive at. I had an opportunity this year, but it didn't work out. I have had conversations with some of the people that are involved with the team and really enjoyed talking to them – but for the remainder of this year, and most likely next, my focus will stay on sporting clays.

**Can you remember your first notable championship win – tell us about your thoughts at that time?**

■ The 2002 Indiana State shoot was probably the first shoot that really had a lot of meaning for me. It was hosted at a club we are involved with here in Kokomo. Dad had volunteered to help run the shoot so he was unable to compete in it. So this was the first event where I shot completely on my own without Dad being in the squad. It was also the largest State shoot Indiana had put on at that time.

I had shot the highest score I had ever shot (86) – good enough to win my first Indiana Ladies Championship. I had done it at my home club with several of my school friends watching and I did it alone. I had won events before this one, but all of the emotions that are tied to this event made it really special.

**Since then, there can't be much more room in your trophy cabinet – but what do you consider to be your most memorable achievement?**

■ My performance at the 2005 Nationals would be high on my list, particularly winning the Ladies title by eight clear targets and also winning the shoot-off for Compak Ladies HOA against Diane Sorantino – but I think I would have to go with my performance at the 2005 Kruger Cup. One of the coolest things you can have on the trophy shelf is a Jon Kruger

handmade bowl he uses for trophies at this event. He gives them away as awards for class and concurrent wins. I had been Runner-up at some of the events, but had never taken home one of the Kruger bowls.



This shoot is scheduled in late April or early May and this year it coincided with Indiana's last blast of winter. In the two days it took to shoot the Main Event we saw temperatures in the mid 30s with rain, snow and wind – trying to shoot was just miserable. Dad had to purchase heat wraps to try and keep me warm while I was shooting – I don't like to shoot in layers and all I had on was a long sleeve t-shirt, polo shirt and a vest. In between stations I would put on gloves and a jacket. It was some of the most miserable weather I have ever shot in.

But in the end, fighting the weather was worth it. I won the Ladies concurrent and was tied for first in A class. When the shoot-off started for the class award the gentleman I was shooting off against chose to go first. The closest target was 20 yards and the farthest was at about 50-55 yards. After he finished he had broken 8 out of 10. I went through the first eight targets dropping only one and needed the last two to win. The last

pair was one of the close trap style targets with a 50-55 yard flaring crosser. The trap target was not a problem and the feeling of seeing that long crosser break for the win is one I will never forget. I went into the weekend wanting to take home one of Kruger's trophies and I now had two! They are on the mantle of our fireplace as a reminder of a very special weekend.

**What are your views about attracting more ladies into our sport? Is there anything more that the sport can do to make it more attractive?**

■ Introducing more ladies into this sport would benefit it in so many ways. I believe that women have just as much skill as the men do with shotguns, they just need to get an opportunity to learn the basics and then get the chance to work on their game without pressure or intimidation.

Clubs could start by having more days on the range and instruction clinics exclusively for ladies. That way it would ease the pressure of ladies trying to learn the basics. If they can find ladies to help out with the instruction that would be even better. Once they are introduced to the sport the rest will take care of itself. The clinics might be slow at first but it would catch on and the numbers would grow.

A club could easily set up a ladies day with a single instructor teaching the basics for a few hours a week at a low cost to the participants. In the long run this would also benefit the club owners with increased revenue when the ladies come back to practice what they have learned. Range owners might also want to step back and take a look at their facilities to see how inviting they look to women. First impressions really count for a lot when you are going into an awkward situation. Most of the

time, if a lady feels uncomfortable in a place, she won't put herself in that situation again.

**As a Lady in Master class, are you resigned to the view that you are no longer competitive in class and must now be content to compete in your concurrent class, perhaps with the ambition to represent your country in a major international tournament?**

■ I have had that comment made to me several times since punching into Master class – “Now that you're in Master class you will just be donating to the Big Boys”. I hope people don't take this wrong – but winning the concurrent classes is very important to me, but if I really thought I would never be competitive in Master class I am not sure my desire to compete would still be as intense as it is.

I know the standards are higher in Master class and to win you must be on your best game every day. But to me, the way to achieve your best game and to cultivate your talent is through hard work, determination and experience. I feel I have the talent and the determination and I am not afraid to do the hard work. So, I feel all I really need is the experience. I also know some of my goals will be achieved and some won't – but I really try not to put a limit on them. Being competitive in Master class and doing what it takes to get there has become a huge part of my shooting commitment.

As for representing the United States in any capacity as part of Team USA, that would be a dream come true. With the number of events that I attend each year I regularly get to see the members of Team USA. The commitment that they have made, out of love of this sport, just astounds me. I would have to think that one of the most cherished memories that any

sporting clays or FITASC shooter could have would be to represent the United States wearing the Team USA vest.

**How do you mentally prepare for a major championship?**

■ I like to think of tournaments as applying the skills and methods I have learned in practice. This



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helps relieve any of the mental stress about performing to a certain level. When I practice I do it in a serious manner and every time I use the same mental routine that I would use in a tournament. I look at my show pair, decide where I will acquire focus on a target, and where I will kill it. I then visualize the complete shot process before I load the gun. After loading the gun, I tell myself to see the rings on the target and then call pull. I repeat the pre-shot process every time I change positions or when I miss a target in practice. That way, when I'm in a tournament situation, every thing feels the same as it does in practice. I don't introduce any new variables into the tournament that I don't experience every day during practice. So to my way of thinking, the tournament days and the practice days are the same.

**What was your biggest mistake during a competition, or shoot-off, that cost you a podium place?**

■ My biggest mistake was at the 2005 Zone 5 at Quail Ridge in Sunman, Indiana. The first day started off great, I preformed well and was leading the Ladies concurrent with an 86. Sunday I had a great start and everything was going as planned. When I got to the third station things started to unravel. The target presentation was two standard targets thrown as a true pair – both of them were incomers. The targets were close and showed all bottom. I took this set of targets for granted and when I walked into the station, if I had any game plan at all, it was a vague one at best. By the time I walked out of the station I had dropped six out of ten of the targets!

The five-bird lead that I had going into the round had evaporated on one station. I didn't

have a game plan to execute and so I didn't perform as well I should have. Something I try not to do is thinking about any missed targets after I leave the station. That day I couldn't let go of the six I had just dropped – and it cost me more in the long run.

I was upset with myself when the scores were tallied up – I had lost by four targets. I really believe that it wasn't the six I dropped at the third station that cost me the tournament, it was the fact that they were easy targets and I just couldn't let go of it. I took the thought of those six targets with me to the next stations and that is what cost me the four I lost by.

Since that incident I have made an effort to let any station I have not done well at, stay at that station. I move on to the next station, concentrate on that set of targets and my game plan. After the round is finished I will mentally go back and look at the mistakes I made and realize what I should have done – that way, when I come across a similar target in future I will know what to do and not make the same mistake twice.

**Your age and build would suggest that with so much competitive shooting, the effects of recoil could be a future concern. What steps have you taken in deciding on your gun and shell choice to limit its long-term effect?**

■ The first way I went about reducing recoil was to make sure that I had a good gun fit. I had my Kemen fitted by Tom Smith, an Ohio stock maker. I believe taking the time to make sure you have a proper gun fit is critical to reducing felt recoil.

I also carry two types of ammo with me when I shoot. One is a soft shooting 1oz or 1 1/8 that I use for close targets out to about 30 yards.

# 2005 MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

NSCA NATIONALS MAIN EVENT LADIES CHAMPION  
 NSCA NATIONALS COMPAK LADIES CHAMPION  
 INDIANA STATE SHOOT MAIN EVENT LADIES CHAMPION  
 INDIANA STATE SHOOT PRELIMINARY LADIES CHAMPION  
 OHIO STATE SHOOT MAIN EVENT LADIES CHAMPION  
 OHIO STATE SHOOT PRELIMINARY AA CHAMPION  
 OHIO STATE SHOOT PRELIMINARY LADIES CHAMPION  
 OHIO STATE PRELIMINARY JUNIOR CHAMPION  
 KRUGER CLASSIC MAIN EVENT LADIES CHAMPION  
 KRUGER CLASSIC MAIN EVENT JUNIOR CHAMPION  
 KRUGER CLASSIC PRELIMINARY AA CHAMPION  
 KRUGER CLASSIC PRELIMINARY JUNIOR CHAMPION  
 KRUGER CLASSIC PRELIMINARY LADIES CHAMPION  
 ILLINOIS STATE SHOOT MAIN EVENT LADIES CHAMPION  
 ILLINOIS STATE SHOOT 5 STAND LADIES CHAMPION  
 ILLINOIS STATE SHOOT 5 STAND JUNIOR CHAMPION  
 TENNESSEE STATE SHOOT LADIES CHAMPION  
 ZONE 3 PRELIMINARY LADIES CHAMPION  
 OHIO CUP LADIES CHAMPION  
 OHIO CUP JUNIOR CHAMPION  
 BIG KAHUNA MAIN EVENT LADIES CHAMPION  
 HOMESTEAD CUP MAIN EVENT LADIES CHAMPION  
 HOMESTEAD CUP PRELIMINARY A CLASS CHAMPION  
 HOMESTEAD CUP PRELIMINARY LADIES CHAMPION  
 KRUGER CUP MAIN EVENT LADIES CHAMPION  
 KRUGER CUP MAIN EVENT A CLASS CHAMPION  
 KRUGER CUP PRELIMINARY LADIES CHAMPION  
 DUCKS UNLIMITED CONTINENTAL MAIN EVENT LADIES CHAMPION  
 DUCKS UNLIMITED CONTINENTAL PRELIMINARY LADIES CHAMPION  
 DUCKS UNLIMITED CONTINENTAL PRELIMINARY A CLASS CHAMPION  
 GAMALIEL CUP MAIN EVENT LADIES CHAMPION  
 GAMALIEL CUP PRELIMINARY LADIES CHAMPION  
 INDIANA ALL STATE TEAM – JUNIOR

The other is a Nitro 27 Handicap that I use when the targets are past the 30-yard mark. So far, the combination of gun fit and two types of shells has worked out without much problem.

**In the early days I guess Dad picked up the bills – but has success brought you any sponsorship?**

■ I have had what I will call a lot of

‘helpers’ along the way – but I don’t have any true sponsors. Several of the businesses in the shooting industry have helped in different ways, some with products others with service. Ron Delimata was a shell distributor from central Illinois that did sponsor me for a short period of time a few years ago until he sold his business due to health reasons. He is a great guy that showed a lot of faith in me

early on and I will always be grateful for his help.

But for right now I am the sole member of what friends jokingly call “Team Dad”.

I have had a pretty good run of success since 2004 so I’m hoping that it might lead to some sponsorship in the near future.

**Of all the venues that you have competed at, which are your favorites and why?**

■ I am very fortunate to have my two favorite venues less than four hours from my house. Quail Ridge in Sunman, Indiana is an excellent facility to compete at. Jon Kruger really works with the terrain to present interesting targets at every station. They have one course located in the woods and it always has great presentations. The targets on this course normally vary from hard to insanely easy. The funny part about it, most of the time, is that it’s the easy ones that you miss – and they come back to haunt you!

They also have a ridge course that is wide open with lots of blue sky. This course allows Jon to throw some really long technical targets with a mixture of medium distance targets.

Another great course is Elk Creek and I would have to say of the major venues this would be the club that I would consider as my home club. Much like Quail Ridge they have two courses with one in the woods and one in the open. They do have subtle differences though, Elk Creek’s woods course is not as dense as Quail Ridge and Elk Creek’s ridge course offers a 70-foot tower that can throw targets to as many as four stations at a time. Both courses offer a very good combination of targets with the Ridge course always being the harder of the two. This is the course where I get most of my

instruction and I try to spend as much time there as I can. The woods course also has a smaller 20-foot tower and many elevated stations to shoot targets below your feet. Elk Creek also works with its terrain in order to present out of the ordinary target presentations.

**Who do you admire the most among contemporary shooters and why?**

■ I would have a hard time picking out one I admired the most, because there are so many good shooters in this sport. There are a few, however, that I admire for different aspects of their game. If I could take some of the characteristics that I admire from some of the different shooters I have met and competed with this year, my first pick would have to be Wendell Cherry for his diligence in his practice routines and the way he strives for perfection. Second would be Bill McGuire because of his attitude, you can tell he is very comfortable with his ability. He is always personable and upbeat – on the rare occasion that he misses a target he always has the same smile and the same chuckle. Next would be Dave Kelley for his sense of humor. I have shot with him a few times this year and I am not sure he has been serious at any of the events. I am also not sure if it would hurt him or help him if he did, either way he’s a blast to shoot with. The list would also have to include Jon Kruger, because of his list of wins that keeps growing year after year. These are just a few of the many people who have left some kind of impression on me this year.

**What single piece of good advice would you give to a young newcomer to the sport?**

■ I believe the fastest way to really enjoy this sport is to get the

mechanics and the basics of the game down as quickly as possible. The easiest way to do that is through instruction and practice. There are a lot of good instructors at the local level that can get you off to a solid start.

Another important thing would be to make sure you have a good gun fit. This is an important aspect for anybody, but it is especially important for the younger kids. Not having a gun that fits can make the recoil unbearable and take the fun out of it in a hurry. Shell choice also comes in to consideration on this one.

The only other little bit of advice I can toss out comes from experience and is directed at parents. They need to give their kids an opportunity to grow into the sport, very few become superstars overnight. Every sport takes a certain amount of time and practice and sporting clays is no different. If we miss a few targets that you think we should have hit, save the comments and just let it go. Dad and I have a list of several things that are not to be talked about during the round. One is that if I miss an easy target we don't bring it up during the round and sometimes it may not be brought up at all. I know as well as he does it should have been hit – so there's no reason to dwell on it! If parents make it fun, they can end up having something in common with their kids that can last a long time.

#### **If you could wave a magic wand, what would you immediately change about our sport?**

■ It would be nice if we were more marketable to the public so we could get major events on TV. Coverage from one of the outdoor type channels such as OLN, ESPN or the Outdoor Channel would be great. It happens occasionally now, but we have a long way to go before that will happen on a regular basis. Maybe the NSCA can pursue someone that is actually in that line of marketing to take us to that level.

#### **Having just reached Master class, what now is your #1 ambition for the future?**

■ The day after I punched into Master class in August I had already rearranged my goals sheet. My number one goal for the 2005 season had been accomplished and I didn't want to lose focus by not having another one to replace it. Since then I have actually added two new goals to my list. I know both will be hard to accomplish and that is what will make them so desirable to achieve. I won't number them one and two because the order in which I reach them might change. But the list includes winning a major event and making Team USA in the next two years. Like I said earlier, I know some of my goals will be achieved and some won't – but I really try not to put a limit on them. ■

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