

SPORTS



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

WORKING ON THEIR GAME

Campers from the Davidson County Community College Storm basketball camp pose for a picture after a great week of learning the fundamentals of the game of basketball and refining their skills. The camp was conducting by Storm head coach Matt Ridge along with DCCC assistant coaches and former players.

Are you still beating your wife?

It's an old joke that can't be answered without making yourself look bad whether you look yes or no, but I'm proud to say that I've beaten my wife, Cherie, twice this week. It has been a while since the last time I beat her and, I can tell you, it felt pretty good. I've been in a slump and she's been beating me on a regular basis and, frankly, I was getting a little tired of it.

No, I don't abuse my wife and she doesn't abuse me, I spoil her and she deserves spoiling. Most men I know would give their eye teeth for a wife that hunts, fishes, and shoots. (At least they would until that wife started outshooting them on a regular basis, which is exactly what Cherie's been doing).

A couple of years back I gave her a Parker 20 gauge shotgun for her birthday and she had the nerve recently to use it to repeatedly outshoot me. This week, I beat her twice, shutting her out at Five Stand, a clay target shotgun game.

When the hunting season is over, most hunters don't touch their undrilled doves until dove season. There's nothing wrong with that but, if you're like me, you get rusty. As a shooting instructor, I find there are two kinds of people, those who take to shotguns easily and those who really have to work at it. Unfortunately, for me, I'm one of the ones that have to work at it and, were it not for clay targets, I'd be a sorry shooter indeed.

I did quite a bit of wingshooting this winter and shot really well. The last duck hunt I went on, I hit more than I missed. I shot a lot of chukars in the process of training my young lab, Larry, and I did a little clean up shooting for pheasant hunts at Beaver Pond Sporting Club. Once the season ended, I got busy with striped bass and forgot about the guns for a while.

With my level of hand/eye coordination, that spelled disaster. When the fishing season was over, I went back to doing a little shooting and suffered the relentless humiliation of my wife outshooting me on a regular basis. Cherie has steadily improved as a shotgunner since she began shooting seriously four years ago,

OFF THE PORCH



DICK JONES
Outdoor Columnist

but the big factor was me. I'm not sure I could have hit my own foot.

Since one of the things I do to earn bread is teach people how to shoot, this is humiliating. I can walk away from the pistol and rifle for quite a while without losing much, but the shotgun requires constant maintenance on my part. I'm not coordinated. I'm so uncoordinated that I can barely drive and talk at the same time. Shotgunning is a hand/eye sport and I keep from losing it to keep from losing it.

A big part of that hand/eye problem relates to confidence. A confident shotgunner doesn't question what he's doing as he fires a shot. That confidence allows him to smoothly swing, break the shot, and follow through. If the shooter is questioning his lead or swing as he fires the shot, he tends to have a jerky swing which puts him in front of or behind the target at times. Pull the trigger at the wrong time and you miss.

True, you have to have all the fundamentals but once you have those fundamentals, confidence is one of the most valuable factors in your success at shotgunning. As a young, awkward 58-year-old, I lose the smoothness of my swing and my follow through as soon as I leave the gun in the safe for more than three or four weeks. Once I miss shots I think I should have hit, I start to analyze and my confidence goes out the window. The loss of confidence creates a self fulfilling prophecy because I start to second guess my lead, jerk the trigger, and stop my follow through to see if I broke the target.

When that happens, I have to get back to basics and shoot confidence targets. Confidence targets are shots that are easy for the shooter to make. For

them to really help, they must vary in nature, but allow the shooter to hit a high percentage and get his or her groove back. Simple crossers, quartering away shots, and shots that are easy to pick up and present predictable flight paths give the struggling shooter the ability to break a high number and recover his confidence. Once you begin hitting those targets regularly, you can move back to the trickier shots and, for me at least, it'll all come back.

A really good way to do this is to shoot a high percentage of shots that are close range shots. This allows you to use a really open choke and increase your odds. A skeet range is perfect for this. It offers a wide variety of targets at close range. Shooting light loads with low recoil also helps by increasing your comfort level. During a slump is no time to experiment with equipment. Use what has served you well in the past, there's an inherent confidence boost in using what has worked before.

Of course, the real solution is to shoot. We're not that far from the shooting season and, if you were frustrated with your shooting last year, maybe you should consider some confidence building now, before you humiliate yourself in the dove field. Cherie and I will be running the Five Stand today at PHA in Churchland. We start shooting at 9 a.m. Come and watch me beat my wife. For directions to PHA, go to phashoots.com.

Dick Jones is a freelance writer living in High Point.

He is a retired competitive shooter, and NRA Certified Instructor. He captained numerous National Championship Teams. He is a Distinguished Rifleman and an NRA Certified Rifle, Shotgun, and Pistol Instructor. He teaches N.C. Concealed Carry Classes and does public speaking for clubs and organizations, hosts outdoor events, and helps church and youth groups raise money with outdoor events.

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WAY

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stepped Zak Wasserman of Louisville, who delivered a laser ground ball through the box to score the game-winner.

Reliever Johnny Hoffman deserves much of the credit, though, pitching 5 2/3 innings of scoreless ball to get the win. He did not overpower, but produced easy balls for his defense to handle behind him.

"He has been working hard all year but has struggled," said Dorzweiler. "We told him that we believe in you and we are not giving up on you. He has worked his tail off and it showed tonight."

Starting games have been tough for the pitching staff of the HiToms this season, and the first inning was no different.

Starter Ben Grisz gave up a single to leadoff hitter Matthew McGovern, who was sacrificed to second via the bunt. Grisz then struck out Justin Black, needing just one more out to get in the dugout.

Cleanup hitter Cody Pack made him wait at least one more batter, as the slugger lifted an opposite-field home run off the bottom of the netting in right-center field, as the Mustangs galloped out to a 2-0 lead.

While Martinsville starter Michael White was busy handuffing the HiToms hitters, his offense was going back to work getting him some more run support.

A run in the third pushed the lead to three

then two more in the fourth made it 5-0 Mustangs, as the Tommies were facing another uphill climb like they have done all season.

Hargis and Frederick helped make the trek low the incline a bit shorter in the fifth, as Hargis brought in Kyle Grieshaber with a bases loaded walk and Frederick scored David Roney on a fielder's choice.

White's arm showed signs of fatigue a frame later, as he yielded two more runs to leave the HiToms trailing by a single run. Matt Dillon singled to start the inning and was brought home a batter later on a double down the left field line by Daniel Kassouf. After making his

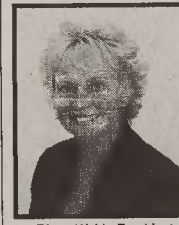
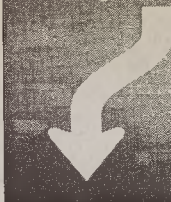
way to third on a wild pitch, Kassouf covered the final 90 feet thanks to a sacrifice fly off the bat of Grieshaber.

The rally kept plugging along, as the final two runs in the ninth kept hopes high of making a huge push in the second half.

"I knew we had the team and talent to close back and win these close ball games," Dorzweiler said. "To come back and win one like this feels awesome."

Notes: The HiToms improve to 2-5 in the second half standings while the Mustangs fall to 3-4 ... Frederick and Dillon had two hits each.

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