

## Robin Sheehan

After she fell in love with sporting clays, Robin Sheehan developed a passion for welcoming new female shooters into the fold.

**A**lthough she's relatively new to the world of sporting clays, Robin Sheehan took to this new endeavor like the proverbial duck to water. Along the way, she's also become a strong and outspoken advocate for women in the shooting sports.

"In the fall of 2020, my then-10-year-old son wanted to join our annual family upland pheasant hunt," Robin explained. "So, to prepare him, I took him to Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation in Dundee, Illinois, for a sporting clays lesson. As I watched him break targets, smiling and fist bumping the instructor, I immediately jumped in on the fun, and then I signed us both up for another lesson the very next day. I liked how Phil Dietrich, the NSCA Level II instructor at McGraw, set my son up for success and safety.

"Phil also asked me what my goals were," Robin continued. "My answer was bold and reflects my competitive nature. 'I would like to be the Illinois State Ladies Sporting Clays Champion,' I told him. Remember, I'd only shot clays twice at this point, but Phil was unfazed by my



▲ Robin came to sporting clays when she wanted to help her son get ready for hunting season. She quickly started taking lessons, too.

response and said, 'Absolutely, you have what it takes. Applied consistent discipline over time will get you to your goal.' He then helped me find a shotgun that fit, developed a training plan, and coached me through the fundamentals. In 2024, I won the title I'd

coveted four years earlier. Phil's original vote of confidence stuck with me, and I appreciate it still."

Robin says the dynamic nature of sporting clays is what continues to draw her to the game. "Each station is a bit of a puzzle. I like to see what type

of mischief the target setters are up to. As a hunter, I appreciate presentations that imitate game birds. As an outdoorswoman, I value thoughtful course design that incorporates the natural beauty of local topographies. A quality sporting clays course should appeal to the senses, integrating valleys, lakes, rivers and woodlands to create a picturesque and almost magical setting."

She participates in 5-stand and FITASC, too.

"I recently got certified as a FITASC referee," Robin reported. "I volunteer quite a bit to referee 5-stand and FITASC, as well as trapping sporting at large tournaments. I believe it's important to have that perspective in order to appreciate all the time and effort that trappers, referees and shoot coordinators put into running a safe and successful event."

Robin also enjoys hunting with her son. "Our sporting clays training in the spring and summer makes us more accurate in the field come fall. This past season we harvested ducks, geese, doves, Hungarian partridge, sharptail and blue grouse, chukar, pheasant, turkey, quail, antelope and whitetail deer."



## ROBIN'S GEAR

**SHOTGUN:** Syren Tempio Sporting 12-gauge  
**AMMO:** B&P Competition One 7/8-ounce 1,160 fps. "My shooting buddies call these bunny loads, but they get the job done."  
**CHOKES:** Briley  
**HEARING PROTECTION:** Soundgear  
**EYEWEAR:** Ranger RE Classic with Rx  
**VEST:** Castellani, proudly emblazoned with Annie Oakley Shooters logo

▲ Robin has a passion for developing female shooters, sharing her love of the game.

Breaking clays is more than mere hunting prep for the Sheehans, though.

"There's something about solving the puzzle, being in an idyllic setting, watching targets get smoked, and the camaraderie and support of fellow squadmates that makes sporting clays so compelling — and addictive," Robin admitted.

Desiring to share that compelling experience with fellow female shooters, in 2022, Robin and a handful of other women founded the Annie Oakley Shooters of Northern Illinois, a groundbreaking 501(c) non-profit within the sporting clays community.

"Our mission is to en-

hance awareness and enjoyment of women's clay target sports in Northern Illinois by offering fellowship, quality instruction, education, and competitive opportunities," said Robin. "As a 100% volunteer-run organization, the Annies' primary focus is on conducting monthly sporting clays clinics, with a heavy emphasis on recruitment, NSCA certified instruction, and retention."

While these inclusive and welcoming clinics emphasize sporting clays, introductions to skeet, trap and FITASC are also offered. So far, the organization has hosted 14 sold-out clinics of 36 shooters each. A total of 193 different women have participated, with at least 49 identifying as brand new shooters. Retention levels hover



▲ Though she's had some personal success shooting, Robin spends much of her energy developing other shooters.

at around 85%. In 2023, the group hosted the Annie Oakley Fall Classic, the Midwest's first all-female registered shoot. Eighty-five registered shooters representing nine states and six decades participated. The 2024 Fall Classic saw an even larger turnout with

93 women. Between the two events, 68 women and girls competed in their first NSCA registered shoot.

"In 2024, we also awarded four \$1,000 stipends to qualified Junior Annies to help subsidize their training and travel costs to competitions,"

noted Robin. “The Annies have also helped six women within our region attain their NSCA Level 1 certification.”

“In 2023 and 2024, we held G.O.A.T. clinics where inspirational female sporting clays athletes spoke to our Annies,” Robin added. “So far, we’ve been honored to have Karen Miles, Diane Sorantino and Desi Edmunds share their skills, passion and expertise with our shooters.”

“The Annies are supremely grateful for the continued support and grant monies we’ve received from the NSCA, North Star Clay Target Foundation, Northbrook Sports Club, Syren USA, Kids and Clays Foundation, and private donors,” Robin acknowl-

edged. “The support we’ve received from the shooting industry and sporting clays community is both humbling and inspiring. It’s a testament to our collective goal of making women and girls on the clays range more mainstream and less of a novelty.”

Robin recalled a recent phone call she received from a gentleman who thanked her profusely for hosting a clinic where his wife had learned to shoot sporting clays. “He’d tried teaching her several times, but she never enjoyed it. However, after attending a few Annie clinics, she is now all in, having bought a shotgun that fit and registered for her first tournament. This couple now has a shared passion they



▲ Robin is also an avid hunter, chasing big game, waterfowl and upland birds regularly with her family.



can enjoy together for the rest of their lives. For me, that’s what makes it all worthwhile.”

Robin believes the future of the shooting sports is poised for steady growth. “Increased focus on and resources dedicated to youth and women’s shooting programs have ensured a steady influx of diverse talent,” she said. “Women and Juniors are knocking on the HOA door at many tournaments. Last year, my son and I shot at registered shoots in 12 states, and we were welcomed and embraced by everyone everywhere we went.”

Last fall, Robin ran for state Delegate in Illinois, but unfortunately didn’t

win.

“This sport has enriched my life so much, I’d love to give back to it on an even larger scale as an advocate for the shooters and clubs in Illinois,” she said. “I believe it’s critically important to develop mentoring and leadership opportunities for female shooters. Only 12 of the 154 NSCA State Delegates elected in 2024 were women, which is just 13%. While I don’t support forced gender diversity, the reality is a fresh perspective, meaningful participation, and insight from women shooters can only help elevate the sport. That’s a win for everyone.” **CTM**