

Sports



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High caliber

Buesseler sisters excel in riflery

John Wagner
Sports Editor

When Abby and Dana Buessler were young, they went to a game fair and shot air rifles. They both enjoyed the experience, and the folks running the air rifle booth told them of a weekly shooting event at the Forest Lake American Legion.

When their father, Bill, was ready to take them to that meeting, the twin sisters resisted.

“We told my dad, ‘We’d rather stay home,’” Dana said. “We had some neighbor kids over, and we didn’t want to go.”

But dad insisted, and the twins relented, and despite their reluctance to attend, they enjoyed the experience. Those 12-year-olds grew to embrace riflery and have since become two of the best collegiate shooters in the country

What’s more, the success Abby and Dana enjoyed in riflery attracted their younger sister, Allison, to embrace shooting as well. As Abby and Dana approach the end of their collegiate careers – Abby competes for the University of Mississippi, while Dana shoots for Murray State – Allison has signed to compete for the University of Kentucky starting next year.

“Right away, I liked that my dad, my sister and I could go together and all learn something from it,” Abby said. “And I liked that it was a unique sport: I could work individually, and grow on my own. As twins, we could work with one another, talk about what we were learning.”

Dana agreed, adding: “We instantly fell in love with it – it wasn’t like anything we had done before. Being able to instantly see your results was fun. That pushes you to test yourself, to see if you can improve and get instant feedback.”

And both girls quickly knew they wanted to get better.

Getting better

When Abby and Dana started their freshman year at Forest Lake Area High School in 2013, they began to put in the work to improve. They started attending prestigious shooting camps and got specific instruction on the technical aspects of the sport.

They soon realized there was more to the sport than grabbing a gun, then aiming and firing.

“It only took a couple of weeks into our time at Gopher [Rifle and Revolver] Club to realize there was a lot more to it,” Dana said. “At first we were shooting prone, so all I had to do was look at the site, line it up and pull a trigger. But then



Submitted photos
Abby Buessler, above, is a senior on the Ole Miss rifle team, which currently is ranked as the No. 4 team in the country. Abby was named to three All-American teams last year. Dana Buessler, below, is a senior on the Murray State rifle team, which currently is ranked as the No. 10 team in the country. Dana was named Ohio Valley Conference Freshman of the Year in her first season with the Racers.



they started teaching us positions, and suddenly I had to hold the gun, and it got heavy. I had to learn how to breathe, and a lot of other things like ‘natural point of aim.’

“They taught us a lot of different techniques, and we started to realize how crazy technical shooting can be.”

Both sisters excelled at the sport, helping lead the Minnesota Center-shots team to the 2016 National Junior Olympic 3-Position Air Rifle National Championship. But the twins quickly realized that competitive fire should not be allowed to consume the relationship they had as sisters.

“Dana and I have a unique relationship in that we don’t have that ‘smack-talk,’ competitive side to our competition,” Abby said. “We go out and wish each other the best. I hope that I beat

her at the end of the day, but that’s where it ends.”

Dana agreed, adding: “We’re competitive in the way that we push each other to be better, but we support each other more than anything else. If Abby has a bad day and I have a good day, all I want is for her to feel better. I want to support her, and she supports me.”

“We realized that we could fight over every single thing, or we could push each other to be better. And we chose to support one another.”

Meanwhile, Allison saw the tight bond that riflery had forged between the two older sisters.

“They did everything together all the time,” Allison said. “They still do – they just live far away from one another now. They’re the same, but they’re different. They’re both super-fun and love doing the same

things, but they’re different. People think twins are exactly the same, but they’re different in their own ways.”

Going their separate ways

As Abby and Dana approached their 2017 high school graduation, each sister had different answers to the question they were asked frequently: would they be going to college together? Abby’s answer would return as yes, and Dana’s would be no.

“I would look at her and wonder what she was talking about,” Abby said.

“Seriously, we knew that if we went to the same college it would be a great time, but we weren’t going to force it.”

In the summer before their senior year, the Buesslers toured six college camps in four days. They began at Ohio State, then traveled to

West Virginia, Murray State, Tennessee-Martin, Kentucky and Ole Miss. It soon became apparent that the sisters favored different schools.

“We looked at and talked about the same colleges, and we realized that if we came to the same conclusion, that would be great. But I think at that point we were ready to go separate ways,” Dana said.

“I wasn’t surprised,” Allison said.

Eventually Abby chose Ole Miss, where she has enjoyed great success. Last year she posted a record-break-

ing season for the nationally-ranked Rebels, qualifying for the NCAA Rifle Championships with a 583 smallbore score and earning a spot on three All-American teams, including National Rifle Association First Team Smallbore All-American.

Dana selected Murray State, where she also has excelled. She was named Ohio Valley Conference Freshman of the Year in 2018, and last season she was named to the All-OVC Smallbore Second Team for the nationally

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