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John J. Kelly

Seven trophies at first Grand

Thirty-one-year-old John Kelly of Cokato, MN (about an hour west of Minneapolis/St. Paul) had never been to the Grand American and decided that 2018 was the year. Not only did he make it to the Grand, but he also shot lights out and won seven trophies: Doubles Class Championship AA winner, 99; Kubota Doubles AA third, 99; Doubles Championship AA fifth, 99; Guerini Handicap (preliminary handicap) eighth, 98; Grand American Handicap ninth, 98; All-Around third in the field, 396; and wrapped it up with HOA AAA runnerup, 981. It's probably good for the rest of us shooters that he sat out Prelim Week.

John started shooting in 2002 at age 15, with older brother Jacob and dad Joel. Jacob continues to shoot, while Joel has retired from the competitive game. John and Jacob are both

27-yarders carrying .9339 (1,800 targets) and .8800 (1,100 targets) averages, respectively, in the 2018 target year. John also finished the year with a .9858 average on 1,900 singles and .9486 on 1,400 doubles.

He has taken no formal classes and said he just went out and shot, learning by "trial and error" with a couple of friends, all of whom who helped each other.

John works in the family concrete construction business in the season and works out of town in the winter, so his shooting pretty much ends in the fall.

He said he really enjoys trapshooting for the good, friendly competition.

He shoots a Beretta 682 Gold combo set. No one-shell guy, John shoots Federal Top Guns for singles, RIO Light 8s for doubles and Winchester AA Super Handicaps for long-yardage competition.

John said his favorite win and memory to date was the shootoff for eighth place in the

Guerini Handicap, where he was tied with 19 other shooters and won the shootoff after three rounds.

Future goals for John include returning to the Grand and improving his performance and winning a Minnesota state championship or two. He came close to the latter twice, losing a shootoff for the singles in 2017 and again coming in second in a shootoff for the doubles in 2018.

John has no home club per se but shoots at three or four within about an hour's drive from home. John enjoys riding motorcycles and ice fishing.

ATA Past President Neil Winston of Minnesota described John as "a nice young man, well-liked by other shooters."

—Dave Kaiser

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