

## WHOSE GAME ARE YOU PLAYING?

Since this scribe last published a missive in this venue another shooting friend has gone to the last hunting grounds. I am weary of losing good companions to death, but considering the consequences, I will accept it as a constructive affair in my life. Since the loss of my pal in January I have, again, spent time reflecting on what is really important.

Laying on a flat surface yesterday while being treated for a shoulder impingement...trying to ignore the pain...my thoughts wandered to the actions of many shooters at events, and, BINGO, an article for this edition came to light.

## WHOSE GAME ARE WE PLAYING?

It came to mind the actions of hunters and shooters that I have observed over the 50 years or so that I have been participating in these outdoor games. In no particular order: folks who berate themselves (I used to do this); those who throw empty shells; those who stamp and stomp after a missed target; those who glare at anybody who is having a good time shooting; those that blame the sun, wind, other contestants etc, when they miss. Their blood pressure must be soaring, their heart rate skyrocketing, and, their game going nowhere.

HAVE YOU EVER PERFORMED ANY OF THESE ANTICS? If so, WHOSE GAME ARE YOU PLAYING?

No need to answer the above. Instead, answer the considerations below.

Are you ready, willing, and able to fix some of YOUR foibles? Do you wish to look less childish in front of others? If so, tag along. We will discuss together some ideas that have worked and that are taught by persons who treat brainy conditions without surgery.

Whenever we put ourselves in front of a group of people we all feel the need to perform well. Society has put pressure on us to present ourselves in a fashion that IT has deemed appropriate. In other words, dear reader, we are directed by mom, dad, teachers, coaches, and countrymen to act as THEY see fit. We have been taught to PLAY SOMEONE ELSE'S GAME.

My dear mom used to tell me to "act your age." I have often wondered what age she was talking about. What she really meant was that I should act HER definition of MY age. In other words, PLAY HER GAME.

When we fail to live up to the expectations of others, we are criticized, chortled, punished, and put into a defensive mode. This can result in manners that we never would wish anyone to film.

Do you want to stop doing this to yourself? Are you willing to begin now? If so, take out pencil and paper and jot down the following guidelines.

I am going to play MY GAME today, tomorrow, and forever. I am going to decide that just being alive to play the game is gift enough. Therefore ALL results will be seen by me as POSITIVE. I will never again have a bad day PLAYING MY GAME.

I will begin immediately to wear ear plugs AND muffs so that I cannot hear the whining and complaining of other shooters. I WILL NOT allow any negative comments made by anyone to interfere with me having fun, regardless of score, numbers of birds in the bag, or how my dog makes me look.

I will never again utter a negative word about my feat nor do so about anybody else's. I will improve my lot with solutions not excuses.

I will work on concentration so that when someone else speaks while I am in the shooting station I won't pay attention because I have determined that distractions are part of my game. I will not again glare, gaze, stare, or otherwise show scorn toward another shooter just because he spoke, sneezed, waved, or leaned too close to me. My game is too sound to be sidetracked by outside occurrences. It is just me and the target from now on. After all, this is not golf! If I want it stone quiet when I do something I will go to church.

I will rehearse being unfocused during my training sessions by having a real friend (defined as someone who really, really, wants me to succeed) intentionally interfere with my practice. The only area off limits is safety violations. I shall ask him or her to jump, squeal, act angry, appear rude, make funny noises. I will be immune to all disruptions from this day forward.

I will get into the best physical shape possible because I understand that when I get tired I am tempted to take shortcuts that lead to poor performance. I will work to keep my blood pressure and heart rate as low as medically possible. I realize that when I am physically tired my mental side may not carry the day. I will remember that being physically fit equals being mentally fit.

I will outwork the competition. I will have balance. Shooting is not the highest point of my life. I do it for fun and escape from daily rigors. I will not again make it a stressful happening.

I shall listen very carefully while other individuals speak. If they dwell on negative thoughts I will gently remove myself from the conversation so that I am not soaking information that could harm MY GAME.

I am going to paraphrase Frank Sinatra. I will do it MY WAY. It is MY GAME. I will make it therefore, an affirmative activity in my days. I will learn and enjoy knowing that this will lead to better performance.

I reckon so.

Until next time, I remain yours in the shooting sports

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