Berck, Burch lead Wildcat Shooting Club in inaugural season



After racking up several honors with their previous club, Louisburg seniors Ashlyn Berck and Trevor Burch are off to a good start with the newly-formed Wildcat Shooting Club. The club had nearly 50 members for the fall season.

Louisburg seniors Ashlyn Berck and Trevor Burch have racked up plenty of awards in the world of competitive shooting.

They just haven't been able to do it for their school – until this year.

The Wildcat Shooting Club kicked off its inaugural season this past fall, and with the help of Berck and Burch, are off to a great start. The club, which competes in the fall and spring, had 47 members compete.

Berck and Burch, who both competed with the St. James Academy team, are now able to represent Louisburg and are already accumulating awards.

“For the last three years, I have been shooting for Saint James because Louisburg did not have a competitive shooting team,” Berck said. “I always wanted to shoot for my own school team, but I never thought I’d get to. I think it’s amazing that Louisburg created their own competitive shooting team and I think it’s even more amazing how many kids they were able to get to join their team.”

Berck thrived in the fall as she was the Kansas Female State Champion in both the Skeet and 5-Stand Divisions. She scored a 24.5 out of 25 on average to win the skeet title and 18.8 average out of 25 to win 5-Stand.

She was also third in the conference in Sporting Clays and was the Kansas Overall Runner-Up.

Berck has experienced a lot of success in her short high school career and she owes some of her accolades to her sister.

“My oldest sister Emersyn also shot in high school and was a state champion in skeet,” Berck said. “Because of this I had a lot to look up to and it had become a goal of mine to also become a state champion. I am not only a state champion, but I am also No. 1 in the nation for girls skeet and second in the nation overall for skeet. I have been competitively shooting for four years and each year our season goes from late February to November and I practice about two days a week. Each season I go through around 10,000 shells.”

As for Burch, he has also experienced quite a bit of success. This fall, he won the conference title in skeet and finished sixth place in the state with a 23 average out of 25.

Burch also placed seventh in the state in 5-Stand and sixth in the conference in Sporting Clays.

Last season, Burch put together a big season with a St. James as he was third in the state last year in the skeet

competition.

“It feels great to be shooting for my school, but I can’t forget the school I shot for my first two high school years, Saint James Academy,” Burch said. “I won medals for them, but now it is time to win some for my school. It makes me smile getting the opportunity to represent my school the first year it was created.”

The Wildcat Shooting Club was started thanks to the help of current coach Micah Drake. There are other area schools that allow clubs to represent them, and Drake knew there was interest in Louisburg.



“I was in the United States Marine Corps and was a weapons instructor during my service,” Drake said. “My youngest son is a freshman at LHS and this sport has been something we’ve enjoyed doing for years, but it was never something offered at the school. Over the summer I spoke to other parents about the topic and they expressed interest in their student wishing it was available as well. So, I did some research, found the USA High School Clay Target League, proposed it in front of the USD416 School Board, and they approved it allowing us to represent LHS.

“It is important to note, that while we have full approval and support from USD 416, we are considered a club and not ‘affiliated’ with the school. They have allowed the LHS students to be in the yearbook as a school club though. We even had the LHS principal (Amy VanRheen) come to one of our shoots to support the kids. She is a big supporter of this.”

The club consists of students in grades 6 through 12 and has gotten popular in a short amount of time. After 47 out for the fall season, Drake is expecting more than 60 to compete in the spring.

Since the club is in its first year, the students are only taking part in trap competitions until they gain more experience.

“The fall season is considered a ‘practice’ season preparing for spring,” Drake said. “It is six weeks long, and while we compete ‘virtually’ against other schools, it does not have a season ending tournament. All of our students learned so much during fall, and always competed to do better each week. Being a brand new club, it was a good opportunity for everyone to learn the basics of this sport and how to follow the rules. During the fall, we shot almost 15,000 rounds of ammunition, without a single safety incident. Every student and coach did an amazing job putting safety first.”



The Louisburg club holds its competition at the Polecat Creek Shotgun Park in Harrisonville, Mo. and Drake is working hard to put together fundraisers to limit the cost for students and their families.

Fees to participate in the fall was $350 and Drake sees it likely being $400 in the spring due to a longer season and a state competition in Wichita. He has also gotten team sponsors, including Scheels, to help with costs. Drake is looking into grants as well as the organization is a non-profit.

“The club supplied to each student all ammunition, clay

targets, shell bags, team t-shirt and sweatshirt with sponsors, safety glasses and hearing protection," Drake said.

Having a local club to participate in has been a positive for Berck and Burch, who are both planning on competing in college. Berck is going to attend the University of Arkansas and join the shooting club there, while Burch is planning on doing the same as he has looked at a school in Nebraska.

Drake is hoping that more students will be interested in joining the sport and is happy with how it has started.

"The response from our community to me starting this club was absolutely overwhelming," Drake said. "The league allows students from nearby areas to participate, if their school does not have a program, which we have a few from neighboring towns. There were many parents that were not able to let their student participate in fall due to prior commitments, but we anticipate having well over 60 students for spring. I had 12 volunteer coaches over the fall season who all have various experiences in this sport, and quite a few that are certified range masters."

For more information on the Wildcat Shooting Club, please contact Micah Drake at Micah@wildcatshootingclub.com.