Take yourself back to when you were 10 years old. This is a time when so many things are new and exciting. I remember when my Dad and I would go down to the local river shooting carp. Man, an 8-pound carp was huge! I would fling arrows right along side my Dad trying to stick one from time to time. I remember watching and helping him land many fish. And there was nothing more exciting than grabbing that line and hauling in a 20lb. buffalo! Well, here we are 30 years later with my daughter Reaghan by my side with her recurve bow and AMS retriever, trying to stick an occasional fish with her Muzzy tipped fiberglass arrow. When we venture out, it’s if I can see through her eyes. Remembering what it was like to be bowfishing at that young age again. The excitement that she sees is timeless. I can understand her enthusiasm for the sport. I am very fortunate to have her by my side enjoying such a sport.

It was a Friday morning, Reaghan and I headed out on a two-hour road trip to do some bowfishing. Reaghan had her new recurve bow that she got from her Grandpa for Christmas. Equipped with a retriever reel, she was ready. Although she has been bowfishing for a couple years now, we talked a little about our strategy during our drive to the lake. This year was looking to be a little more exciting. Sporting her new bow, her confidence level was much higher this year knowing that her new bow has more draw weight and more capable of penetrating the large scaly fish.

We arrived at the lake around 9:00am. The lake was like glass. This is an awesome site for any bowfisherman to see. We loaded the boat with our equipment, lunch and other necessities. Not far from the boat launch was a small island. I fired up the outboard and shot across the lake to the island where we started our day off. We started off seeing a few small carp in the clear, but algae packed water. I would point out fish while trying to get close. Visibility was a definite issue. This did not give Reaghan much time to react before the fish fled from danger. So, we changed up our
strategy and headed for weedy areas where we could maybe find some suspended fish. We pulled up to a narrow between an island and the main shoreline of the lake, which was pretty weedy and abundant with vegetation. I jumped onto the deck lowering the trolling motor and quietly waved Reaghan to come up on the shooting deck. I could already see a few fish just below the surface scattered throughout the area. Reaghan instantly spotted a few of them also as she rose up onto her shooting position. With her fingers lightly grasping her bowstring, she was locked and loaded. Suddenly, a carp swam out from under a clump of floating vegetation. Reaghan, in slow motion, but quickly, drew her bow to her anchor point and released! Miss! Just high. She quickly reeled in her arrow and got it ready for the next shot.

As the day went on we had several more close calls. Then, as we trolled into a shallow area we saw several carp lying near the surface. Reaghan spotted the one she wanted to go after. So, I slowly turned the trolling motor and headed in that direction. As we neared the scaly target, she was ready. While slowly raising her bow, I closed the gap and she drew her bow and “WHACK!” Fish on! The carp took off taking her arrow with it. She grabbed her line and started to pull the fish in. I jumped down off the deck to try to get to the fish along side the boat for a quick retrieval. The fish made a powerful run and the line went slack. The fish pulled off.

Even though the fish was off, Reaghan was so excited, she started telling me about the encounter and reliving the moment. She told me how she kept her eye on the fish and slowly drew and shot. I could tell there was no disappointment that the fish had pulled off. Her adrenaline was running so high that all she wanted to do was get after more fish. So, that’s exactly what we did. Over the next hour of so, we had several more encounters. Then Reaghan asked me why I was not shooting. I tried to explain to her how this hunt was for her and we are going to get her some fish.
I could tell that she felt bad that I was not shooting fish. She asked me to shoot some fish so she could haul them in. So, I told her I would do just that.

Within minutes, we came upon some cruising buffalo. I closed the gap between the boat and the fish. As I was moving in, Reaghan suddenly said, “Dad! There’s one right there!” Sure enough, a buffalo seemed to appear out of nowhere in front of us. I quickly drew my bow maybe even falling a couple inches short of full draw and snap shot. I had arrowed the buffalo high and towards the tail. Reaghan reacted quickly to grab the line of my AMS Retriever and held tight as the fish made a nice, powerful run. She was giving it all she had to hold on. The fish seemed to have eased up on its run and Reaghan took advantage and started to haul it in. As the fish came along-side the boat, I reached down and grabbed the arrow that was stuck in the fish and lifted it into the barrel. Like Reaghan had done several times before, she knew to grab the fish whacker and give him a little tap to calm it down. She gets a charge out of retrieving my fish.

Over the course of the day, Reaghan had shot a couple dozen times. She stuck three fish, which pulled off during the fight, hit several more, which did not penetrate, and had a bunch of near misses. All in all, both of us were very pleased of the outcome of the day. She had a blast shooting and hauling in several of my fish. Reaghan shoots a recurve like myself and right now has a pretty short draw on her 30lb. recurve. So the ability to penetrate fish is minimal. But just getting out and practicing on her form and shooting have proven worthwhile. When she shoots, every shot is right there within inches of the fish and a fair amount of the time she does hit the fish. At the young age of 10, she is looking to be a very prominent bowfisher. She loves the sport and goes with me whenever she can. She loves spotting and helping me haul in my fish as well as shooting herself.

She has learned very important skills such as moving slowly not to alarm any fish and her spotting skills have greatly improved this past year also. I am very proud of her in the aspect that she never gets discouraged if she’s not landing many fish. She understands the limits of her bow and that it takes just the right situation for her to penetrate one. She just keeps plugging away, and improving her form and ability to spot and shoot fish. Reaghan enjoys every minute of our outings. And I for one will not take them for granted. Spending this time with her is precious. Kids grow
up too fast and when she grows up and starts to find other interests in life, these moments will only become more valuable to me as memories. Hopefully, she will remain active in bowfishing and all the hunting we do. Exposing her to the outdoors and getting her involved is my part and I do that by making sure she sees plenty of it and gets the opportunity to learn, enjoy and understand wildlife and the outdoors.

About the Author

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Ty and his Daughter Reaghan live in Warner, SD. They are on the Pro-staff for AMS Bowfishing.