

# SASP athlete attempts “GM Sweep”



**R**yan Flowers, a Scholastic Action Shooting Program (SASP) athlete on the Clemson Action Shooting Team is on a mission. A goal that is focused on racking up Steel Challenge classifications. Grand Master classifications to be specific. In every division. As we spoke with him, we found out that his pursuit of the “GM Sweep” is really more about proving one thing: that shooting is shooting.

Ryan Flowers, at just 22 years old is the 1<sup>st</sup> and only 11-division Steel Challenge Grand Master and the 2019 Steel Challenge Single Stack World Champion. But we all begin somewhere.

“I was watching Shooting USA on the Outdoors Channel and saw coverage of the USPSA Nationals,” says Flowers. “I saw all the big pros like Max Michel run the course and I thought it was pretty cool.” Like many new shooters, Ryan found his first competition by doing an internet search that came back with a local IDPA match he could try his hand at. “I did pretty bad,” chuckled Flowers.



“I thought I could shoot before I got there and ended up finishing in the middle of the pack. This lit a fire under me to practice and get better.”

From then on, Ryan began finding action shooting sports like USPSA and Steel Challenge to compete in and like many of our athletes, he and others formed their own SASP team at Clemson University. When asked how he got involved in the Scholastic Action Shooting Program, he plainly responded, “There wasn’t a shooting team, so we made one. Andrew Jezewski contacted me once the team was established and at first, I wore a lot of hats. Founding member, President, Recruitment Manager, Training Scheduler, you name it. We wanted to create a team-based experience for Clemson students, so the SASP was the perfect program for that.”

By this time Ryan had already started making a name for himself as an individual competitor, especially in the world of Steel Challenge. The action shooting sports typically foster friendly and supportive communities, despite the fast and fierce competition. However, Ryan soon understood the positives of having a team-based atmosphere to compete in, something fundamental to the SASP experience.

“The team scoring shows how well you can get four individuals shooting together comprehensively”, said Flowers. “It also shows how well you work together as a team and how you’ve brought up everyone’s skills to a certain level when it comes time for the match. It’s not just your performance that matters anymore. You’ve got three teammates that are relying on you to perform and vice-versa.”



“Another great thing about the team is the ability to take people who otherwise would not be able to financially get into the sport and even people who would normally be intimidated about shooting matches, we can help them and encourage them when they are first starting out. The majority of our members had never competed in a match before or even really shot a firearm before. It’s all about furthering the shooting sports.”

Last season, Clemson University came back from the Collegiate Nationals with medals for 3<sup>rd</sup> PCC and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 1911 division. Ryan himself secured male overall wins in Centerfire Pistol, 1911, PCC, and Iron Sight Rifle. When not focused on SASP competitions with his team, Flowers is actively striving to achieve what is called the GM Sweep in Steel Challenge, who’s competitions follow a similar format to our SASP matches. The sweep requires the competitor to achieve Grand Master-level mastery in every division, something that has never been done before. Even now, Flowers is in a league of his own as the first in history to earn 11-division Grand Master certifications, his current record.



“We’ve learned from practicing SASP stages during the season and transferred what we know about shooting steel over to Steel Challenge competitions,” detailed Flowers. What I find enjoyable is being able to shoot other guns on these stages. I got my first GM classifications in Rimfire Pistol Open and Irons. Then I started thinking, if I did this well with these two, how well can I do in other divisions? By the time I got

to three or four, at that point I thought, maybe I can get all of them? It’s fun to be able to go from shooting an Open gun, to a revolver, to a pistol caliber carbine on the same stages. Something I’ve learned through achieving a high level of mastery in many different kinds of firearms, the principle is the same. When you sit down to analyze, “how can I shoot rifle and pistol better,” you can break it down even further and simply ask “how do I shoot the gun the best?” At that level, I don’t think there’s a whole lot of difference between divisions. When you approach it this way and are honest with yourself, it can really take your comprehensive shooting to the next level.”



Ryan’s final two GM classifications to achieve in Steel Challenge are Irons Sight Revolver and Optic Revolver. Young SASP competitors often begin challenging themselves in additional kinds of action shooting competitions such as Steel Challenge and USPSA. The former, is often regarded as the ultimate test of drag racing with pistols and rifles. However, a very interesting fact is that in terms of participation, **the SASP National Championship is the largest action shooting event in the world.** This incredible achievement is all done with youth athletes like Ryan and the future for the action shooting sports look bright!

SASP Collegiate Nationals begin March 13-15th at CMP Marksmanship Park in Talladega, AL. Squads begin each morning at 9am with afternoon squads beginning at 1PM. Awards to follow last shots Sunday afternoon.