

CATHY I don't know if you saw the story and the amazing video of a cow moose who ambled over to the blind where

WURZER: Breann Zietz of Minot, North Dakota, was hiding, her bow and arrows in hand. The massive moose stuck her ample snout into the blind and sniffed Breann who was scared silly. Breann was actually hunting for deer. It's archery hunting season right now for deer in our region.

Now you don't need to hunt deer with a bow and arrows to enjoy archery. Archery is an ideal sport for beginners of all ages. You don't have to be especially strong or athletic or fast to hit a target. It just takes a lot of focus.

At least that's what Dana Keller teaches her students at A1 archery in Hudson, Wisconsin. Dana is a level three USA archery coach and a bow hunter. And she's been instrumental in training a growing number of women archers and hunters how to work a bow. Dana, welcome to Minnesota now. How are you?

DANA KELLER: I'm good, Cathy. How are you today?

CATHY Good. Thanks. So I know you're one of the trainers in the long-running Minnesota DNR's bow program. They're

WURZER: becoming an outdoors woman program. What do you teach in your classes?

DANA KELLER: Yes. Oh, my gosh. We do lots of different classes, lots of different types of classes. With the archery things, we focus mainly on teaching the ladies how to hunt.

So we'll talk about clothing. We'll talk about attire. We'll talk about the things that you need, how to take a good shot, all those really important things that we need to know as bow hunters. And it's great classes.

CATHY For my male hunter friends, they say-- because I don't know women who bow hunt, to be frank with you. My male

WURZER: hunter friends say that when you go out and you bow hunt, it takes a lot of skill. You truly are an outdoors person if you can do that.

DANA KELLER: Yep. We were just having this conversation this morning in the shop here about what true hunters are. And the opportunity with a bow and arrow to get that shot is so small. You try your best to get the best opportunities, but it takes so much to get that critter in the right position. And to have the shot present itself, you really have to love nature.

You have to love nature sitting out there for hours on end and seeing the birds and the squirrels and the moose and whatever else might come near your blind. It is really amazing. It's very grounding for me. I absolutely love to be outside.

CATHY Can you imagine by the way, the story of the moose, the woman I told you about?

WURZER:

[LAUGHTER]

The video is amazing. She was scared silly as I mentioned. And here's this moose just sticking her snout in the blind. And oh, my goodness. I'll have to post that video for you.

For women who are not interested in hunting but think that the sport of archery might be interesting, are you noticing more women becoming interested in that?

DANA KELLER: It has grown so, so much over the past. I've been A1 for going on eight years now. And our women's leagues have grown immensely. In fact, the October league that's going to start up on the 13th, we already have 41 women registered.

It just keeps getting better and better. And in our last league, it was just a six-week league, we had 27 ladies, and 16 of them shot their personal bests. And we had three that shot Robin Hood's.

So the ladies are doing phenomenally. Women have really, really good skills because we are multitaskers. They're amazing archers. And young girls, too, I'm telling you, it's amazing to watch them [AUDIO OUT] boom archers.

CATHY Say, by the way, what's a Robin Hood? You mentioned something about Robin Hood.

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: That's when you shoot [AUDIO OUT] do one arrow into the back end of another one and bury it in there. That's like Robin Hood--

[LAUGHTER]

--when he'd split the arrow.

CATHY Yeah.

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: Yeah. They actually-- we can do that. We do that here.

CATHY Wow.

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: It's very cool.

CATHY You don't need to be fast or athletic?

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: No, not at all. And a lot of people wonder about that when they come to learn. They're like, do I have to be strong? Do I have to be this? And honestly, the those that we have set up for the kids and adults are all able to be used by boy scouts, girl scouts, cub scouts, any kind of groups that might come through, hit the doors. We actually have those bows set up light enough for them. So anybody can shoot.

CATHY Somebody likened archery to yoga. You're in your head, you're totally focused. Is that accurate?

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: It is.

CATHY Is it?

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: It is. And so many times when I'm walking down the line, an archer will actually have me stop behind them. They feel that energy from me.

I'm very calming. I talk them through the process. One archer said she went home, and she had a dream. And she could hear me repeating the shot process. And I said, that's not a dream. That's a nightmare.

[LAUGHTER]

You're hearing my voice. And she giggled, and I said, no. She goes, it's really good that my subconscious is really taking over. And I tell an archer if you're shooting your bow and arrow, if you're thinking about dishes or laundry or work or the kids, go for a run.

When you're on the line, you should be thinking the shot process. It is very zen-like when you really, really get into it.

CATHY What's the first thing you teach a beginning archery student?

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: Oh. Well, with the shot process, we start out with stance. So it's how they stand. And then we teach them about how to hold the bow.

I always give a set of range rules, of course, ahead of time just so that they understand the rules of the range. But really, the first few shots, we want to make them as simple as possible. And then we'll build on those skills.

Especially with women and ladies, if you give them too many things to think about, our brain can only think about one or two. So I always start everybody out very simply, just shooting those first notes. And then after it becomes subconscious, then we start adding in those other pieces.

CATHY I know, Dana, you said that you don't have to have a lot of strength. But I have attempted to at least shoot a bow and arrow in my life in the past. And it did seem like you have to just get a really polar back. And I thought, oh, this is a little bit harder than I thought. What kind of weight are you talking about?

DANA KELLER: See the thing is, is I bet that the bow that you were trying to shoot, I bet was it a boy's bow?

CATHY Yeah.

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: A male?

CATHY Yeah.

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: Yeah. So they draw back way more weight than what normal ladies can draw or an average lady can draw. So we have Genesis bows here made by Mathews and Mission. And these bows are lightweight. They don't have that peak where when you draw them back, they get heavier, heavier, heavier and then lighter. These are like one continuous, the same weight through the whole cycle.

So some of them are set up at probably only 10 pounds. Some of them are set up-- but kids bows, we can set up really late. I have I have kids as young as six that take lessons from me and use our equipment. So we have all kinds of bows that people can shoot. And you do not have to be strong to do it.

CATHY Oh, I'm curious how you got started in this.

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: Yeah. So 33 years ago, I started shooting a bow with an ex-boyfriend of mine. And I didn't really know much about archery or hunting. And actually my parents are anti-hunters. They don't like hunting at all. And I've gotten them to the point where they're partially accepting of it.

But it is nice to know that side as well. So when I teach, I understand what people are talking about when they talk about anti-hunting and this and that. But when I go, I personally am trying to feed my family.

And that's how I was introduced. The people that I hunted with and shot archery with when I first started, that's what they did. They utilized everything, every part of that deer.

And then I thought, well, if I'm going to do this and if I'm going to harvest an animal, I want to do the same thing. I'm going to feel responsible for it. And I am. So if it's turkeys, bear, deer, anything that I'm hunting, I am totally responsible for that critter.

CATHY And when you're out, what's your-- I don't know if this is the right word to use or term, but what's your
WURZER: percentage of success? Do you usually come back with a deer?

DANA KELLER: So that's hard with hunting. Like I said, you have to literally be in the right place at the right time. The deer have to be moving through that area.

And really, it's not a percentage thing for me because last year I harvested a really nice doe. I was down in Missouri and harvested a nice doe down there. But I didn't get anything in Wisconsin last year.

So I spent a lot of time in the stand. And I spent a lot of time just rejuvenating myself in the stand and hoping and being excited. And that's another thing with archery and bow hunting. You're hopeful.

It shows a lot of hope, a lot of desire to get out there to spend the time doing it. And I love that part of it. You never know. Today could be the day.

[LAUGHTER]

CATHY You never know.

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: You never know.

CATHY I'm an angler. And I get out and I fish. And you never know what's going to happen. Exactly.

WURZER:

DANA KELLER: Yes. You don't know. You could have a day where you're skunked. You could have a day where you hit a honey hole and there's fish [INAUDIBLE]

You could get some that come through. You could have days where the weather doesn't cooperate, and maybe the deer just stay hunkered down.

But even if it's freezing cold, I've hunted in 20 below. And even if it's freezing cold, I'm like, I'm still out here. I still get this, this beautiful scenery and just that peace and quiet in the solitude. I love that. I love that.

CATHY And again, getting back to folks who might not want to hunt but are interested in archery-- I remember the actress, Geena Davis. Remember she became an Olympic-caliber archery champ. But she was like, what, 41 or 42? And I thought, well, good for you that you're doing that. So it is again possible that you can start at a, shall we say, an advanced age.

DANA KELLER: Oh, any age. In our women's leagues, we've had kids as young as six. And we have two women right now that are in their 80s, and one of them that's-- she's 85 this year. I didn't say that. Yes, I did.

She's 85, and she actually shoots. She is very competitive. And she shoots in the National Senior Games in Archery. She has titles in the senior games. She has titles that she's won and records in Wisconsin and Minnesota. She's amazing. But anyone.

We even have one archer that is in the women's league right now that has arthritis. And her arthritis is really bad. And she came and brought her daughter in for a lesson. And I said, do you want to shoot? She's like, I can't. And I'm like, yes, you can. She's like, no, I can't. And I said, let's just try.

And she said, I can't even straighten my arm. And I go, but is it solid right there? And she said, yeah. And I go, then you can shoot. And now she's been shooting and joining the league. She bought a bow. She loves it. She loves it. Anyone can do this. We've had archers in wheelchairs come in and shoot with us.

CATHY Wow. Well, I tell you what, I appreciate the conversation. It sounds pretty interesting, especially those of us who need to get out of our heads and just concentrate on something else. Dana, thank you so much for the conversation.

DANA KELLER: Thank you, Cathy. I hope you have a wonderful day. And thank you for including me on this. I appreciate it big time.

CATHY Absolutely. Dana Keller is a level three USA archery coach and a bow hunter. And she's based in Hudson, Wisconsin.