

SPC Janzie Mason

2022 Women's American Trap National Champion



Spc. Janzie Mason, a combat medic specialist with the 209th Medical Company (Area Support), Iowa Army National Guard, smiles for a portrait with the shotgun she uses to compete for the Grand View University shooting team outside Joint Force Headquarters in Johnston, Iowa, on May 11, 2022. Mason, of North Liberty, Iowa, is the 2022 ACUI Women's American Trap National Champion, having come in first in her category and third overall for collegiate American trap shooting. Mason believes the skills she uses on her shooting team and in collegiate competitions translate well to the skills that make good Soldiers. "It builds a better prepared Soldier, mentally," said Mason. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Tawny Schmit)

Soldiers in the Iowa Army National Guard are very familiar with weapons like the M4 carbine rifle and the Sig Sauer M17 pistol, which are often used to test Soldiers' marksmanship skills during annual qualifications.

But Spc. Janzie Mason, a combat medic with the 209th Medical Company (Area Support), prefers a shotgun.

Mason worked through her freshman and sophomore years at Clear Creek Amana High School in North Liberty to save up for her first competition shotgun so she could compete on the school's shooting team.

"So, I've been competing for about six years," Mason said. "My friends were on the team and I thought it was cool."

Mason went on to participate in Junior Olympics shooting events, earning some wins along the way. While getting to compete with her friends initially drew her to the sport, Mason found that she enjoyed challenging herself. Joining the IAARNG in 2019 as a combat medic seemed like a natural choice.

"It's very mentally challenging and it takes a while to get good at [shooting]," Mason said. "It takes a lot to keep your head in it."

After graduating high school and completing her training to join the Guard, Mason attended Grand View University in Des Moines with a shooting scholarship. Like many collegiate shooting teams, her male team members outnumbered the females, but Mason never saw that as a disadvantage. Shooting teams are typically much smaller than mainstream college sports teams, and Mason's teammates became like a second family.

"I don't think people realize how good a small community can be," Mason said. "It's kind of like the Guard. We're it for each other. It's a good time and you can learn a lot from the community around you."

Mason and the rest of her Grand View Viking teammates went on to win the Scholastic Clay Target Program National Championship for American Trap in 2021. Mason then competed in the ACUI Collegiate Clay Target Championships and became the 2022 ACUI Women's American Trap National Champion in her category, placing third overall in American Trap.

It was the first and last time she would get the chance to compete in the ACUI division with her team

since the competition was canceled the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ironically, Mason said she finds the American trap shooting style to be a bit mind-numbing because it's not as interactive as the other disciplines in competitive clay shooting.

When Mason competes, she doesn't talk to anyone until she's completely done with a round. She focuses on grabbing the next box of ammunition, walking to the line and shooting. Her final scores reflected her discipline and high level of skill: she hit 99 out of 100 clay targets on the initial round, and 148 out of 150 in the shoot-off round.

"Initially, I was shocked at my win," Mason said. "I guess my head was in it. You don't really know until after you start shooting if it's going to be a good day or bad day, in my experience. My favorite part about the day was that I ran 247 out of 250 for the entire day of targets."

Now that Mason's time on the Grand View shooting team has ended on a high note and she earned her bachelor's degree in social work, she's preparing to go out the door with the 209th MCAS for their upcoming deployment to Poland. Her unit has been supportive of her passion for trap shooting, even when they jokingly give her a hard time for not shooting every target during annual qualifications.

"One is flying targets with a shotgun, and one is stationary targets with a rifle, so totally different world," Mason said, "but competing builds a better prepared Soldier, mentally. It increases your awareness of yourself and others around you. Those skills transition well over to being a Soldier, whether you're drilling or doing warrior tasks."