

Family Hunt Ends in Emergency Room for Senior Kyle Stover

by Zoe Cosato, senior editor

Pheasant hunting opening weekend 2014 started out with the perfect weather for hunting. The autumn chill made the air crisp, but not uncomfortable. Golden, orange, and red leaves crunched quietly under methodically moving feet. White, fluffy clouds dotted the clear blue skies. The Stover family couldn't have asked for a better day for their yearly hunt near Northville, South Dakota; unfortunately for Kyle Stover, the day turned out to be far from perfect.

Senior Kyle Stover did what he does every year. He was up, clad in orange, and on his way by noon. Stover and his father went to go hunting with a group of family and friends on Sunday, October 19. Stover's party included his father (Lonni Stover), other family members, and friends. The twelve have successfully hunted as a group together before, often catching the limit in record time, so why would this year be any different?

At approximately 1:30 pm, the party was in a cornfield a half mile east of Northville. Kyle and a member of the hunting party were blocking at the east end of the field while the rest of the party walked through the corn toward them. Kyle communicated to the other blocker where he was going to be position himself so the man would know where he would be standing. As the walkers reached over halfway through the field, the man exited his pickup and began to approach the walkers. When the man reached the first row of corn, a pheasant flew up and was pushed to the corner of the field where Kyle stood. The man turned and pulled up to shoot; the pheasant and 35 yards were all that separated the RHS senior and the end of the barrel. The man shot, hitting an unintended target: Kyle Stover.

"Believe it or not, I didn't want to go hunting that day. My dad was hunting with family and friends in Northville and I was bored, so I went. Not twenty minutes after I got out of the pickup, I got shot. The last thing I remember was putting my hand up to block my face," Kyle said.

Kyle hit the ground, stood back up and remained conscious, but immediately went into shock. Kyle's dad, Lonni, watched helplessly as it the events unfolded. Lonni sprinted about 50 yards down to his son. Kyle, was beginning to bleed profusely from the face by the time his dad reached him. Lonni threw Kyle into his pickup and sped Kyle to Aberdeen as another member of their hunting party called 911 to have the roads cleared.

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“It was the scariest thing in my life to watch my son get shot. We didn’t realize at first it was that serious. He got lucky. He was wearing three shirts and he happened to bring his hand up before he was shot; he got very lucky,” father Lonni Stover said.

Upon the trio’s arrival in Aberdeen, Kyle was taken to the emergency room where he spent about five hours. Upon Kyle’s arrival, eight medical professionals began to work on him to determine where the BBs hit and if any vital organs were damaged. While at the hospital, Kyle received multiple X-Rays and an MRI, while the doctors attempted to remove some of the pellets and determined a date for surgery. Kyle had surgery on Thursday, October 23, to remove twelve pellets deemed problematic.

“It was the scariest thing that has ever happened to me. I know it most definitely made a big impact with my family and cousins to be sure to wear orange and understand that just because you’re being safe, that doesn’t mean that others are being safe and aware of their surroundings. It shows



that age doesn’t matter; it shows that just because you have experience doesn’t mean you know everything,” Kyle said.

Kyle was hit by multiple BBs, ranging from his eye to above his knee. Kyle had one by his eye; two by his nose; one through his ear; one through the thumb; four in his hand; a few in his wrist; many in his arms, shoulders, and chest; a couple in his legs; and one in his neck. If Kyle had not blocked his face, he was told there is no question he would have been blinded. Kyle was also told that the shot could have easily been lethal because of the BB in his neck, only an inch away from his jugular, not to mention the BBs in his chest. Kyle still has 15 BBs in his body.

Kyle’s mother Brenda Stover said, “I think the call was a mother’s worst nightmare. Lonni said five words to me, ‘Kyle’s been shot, Avera Hospital.’”

Not everyone who is in a hunting accident is as lucky as Kyle. When something so tragic and terrifying happens, it is a strong reminder that hunting is a sport that will always require extra

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Down, but not Out

Senior Kyle Stover was taken to Avera on October 19 after a group pheasant hunt. At the time this picture was taken, the doctors had cleaned his wounds and attempted to remove some of the pellets lodged in his stomach. As can be seen above, Stover’s eye is swollen from one of the BBs that could have blinded him.



vigilance. The accident has changed the Stover family's way of doing things when it comes to sports involving firearms.

"It's changed my way of hunting. I do go hunting with my friends, Stuart [Meyer] and Collin [Klebsch]; and even though I know I can trust them, I still don't feel comfortable. It's made me a more cautious, even scared, hunter," Kyle said.

Kyle isn't the only Stover who's credited the accident to a more cautious way of hunting. Kyle's dad, Lonni, appears to feel the same way.

"It will make me more aware of where people are at when I go hunting. I haven't gone pheasant hunting yet [since the accident], and it will make it very hard to go hunting in a large group ever again," Lonni Stover said.

While this accident, and accidents like it, may have been avoidable, the outcome could have also been much worse. As senior Kyle Stover continues to recover, Kyle's family, friends, and classmates continue to count their blessings and stay thankful that the accident wasn't any worse than it could have been.

"We take a lot of things for granted, I try to make more of a habit of hugging him [Kyle] every day now. The amount and intensity of compassion and friendship that was shown by his friends was heartwarming. Kyle was not left alone for days; it was like the kids took shifts. I don't know if they consciously did that, but that just kind of shows what kind of character and the depth of friendship our kids here have," Brenda Stover said.

Over a month after the accident, Kyle is moving on with his life as he continues his recovery. The RHS senior is showing that he is more than his accident; more than a victim of near-tragic circumstance. Kyle will be using his unique experiences and perspective to talk to local Hunters Safety Courses, like the Spink Hunters Safety Course. But Kyle will also be doing more his senior year than just encouraging positive change in the way people hunt; Kyle will also be spending time with friends and family, hunting, ice fishing, looking at colleges, and enjoying his senior year. Kyle is looking at getting a degree in Ag Business from Minnesota West after he graduates.

"I'm not going to get scared away from Northville because of the accident; I want to work for Pioneer Seeds in Northville after college," Kyle said.

Kyle hopes his accident will serve as a strong reminder to be aware, know the rules, and never forget how precious life is.

"Take time to enjoy things, don't always think what you have to do next, take time to enjoy what's now," Kyle encouraged.

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