



# The Only One?

## Steve Brown's Double World Slam by Bow

STORY BY BRAD DYE

**W**hen he first told me the story in 2005, I got a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. I hate losing any animal after the shot, but the loss of a turkey hits hard. I could tell he was upset, his quest over, but unfinished on the last day of the hunt. The two birds that would have completed his slam had each sailed off the side of a

mountain in the Sierra Madre range, along with his hope of completing a single season double world slam with bow and arrow. However, for Mississippi native Steve Brown, the quest is never over, it continues year round, and the dream for a single season double world slam with a bow never died, it was only delayed. As an outfitter, Brown's work does not end

after the hunt or even after the season. The owner of Brown and Company Outfitters works tirelessly throughout the year planning trips, applying for tags, communicating with clients, booking flights, and acquiring new land and hunting rights. When it comes to hunting and outfitting, he does it all, but talk to him briefly and you will quickly realize that his true





*Brad Dye, story author, and Steve Brown*

brought a range of emotion to his face, and as the interview progressed, I knew I was sitting across the table from the man that a friend in North Carolina, Dudley Bell, had labeled “the best turkey hunter you have never heard of,” and now, a man with a new world record. At the time of this writing, Brown was in the process of registering his single season archery double world slam with the National Wild Turkey Federation. In my search, I have been unable to find a single season archery world slam in the NWTf records, let alone a double archery world slam in a single season.

To complete a grand slam is an amazing accomplishment. Completing a Royal or World Slam takes this accomplishment to a higher level, and to do any of the three in a single season or with a bow and arrow is another dimension. To complete the coveted World Slam of turkey hunting in a single season with a bow and take two of each subspecies is the stuff of legend. The accomplishment puts Brown in a different category—world record holder. As with any quest, there are always obstacles to overcome. If you have ever been blessed to hunt the wild turkey, you know that no extra obstacles are necessary. Each subspecies has its own set of challenges and the hunter need not look to add any additional in order to make this quest a challenge. However, Brown began the season with a handicap. In the fall of 2016, he had blown out his knee on an elk hunt in Wyoming. The injury kept him out of the trees throughout bow season back home in Mississippi and in Illinois (as a side note, Brown was still

passions are turkey hunting and bow hunting. In all my years, I have yet to meet anyone who has a passion for either of these that matches Brown’s.

When he set out once again in 2017 to make the dream of a single season double world slam a reality, I asked if he would give me the chance to tell his story. I was thrilled when he agreed. I have hunted with Steve

as both a friend and an outfitter and for either, I would put him at the top of the list. When we finally sat down for our interview on a Sunday morning in June of last year, I could tell that Brown was tired. The effort required to pull off the feat he had just finished in May still showed on his face. He was tired, but he was happy. Reliving each memory, each bird,



able to take one of his best deer ever with a bow from a ground blind in Illinois during the 2016 season, a Pope and Young deer that scored 163”). He endured intensive rehab in order to be able to maintain his rigorous pace during the 2017 turkey season and opening day found him walking, with a limp and a little slower, but walking. I did not have the opportunity to hunt with him this past spring and I regret that as I know, for once, perhaps I could have kept pace with him in the woods as we narrowed the distance between ourselves and a gobbling turkey. From my experience, Brown often becomes a world class sprinter in the turkey woods and is a strict adherent to the maxim that the shortest distance between two points

is a straight line — briar thickets, creeks, swamps, sheer cliffs, it matters not, for en route to a hot bird, Brown is a machine.

Over the course of our interview, I could tell that for Brown, each turkey was special. I understand that sentiment, as I know any that have hunted the wild turkey do as well. However, Brown is at a different level than most. At the end of the 2017 turkey season Brown’s lifetime turkey tally stood at 376 total. Of these 252 were taken with a shotgun or muzzleloader and 124 with a bow. Brown rarely hunts with a gun anymore, after making the full transition to archery in 2003. According to Brown, “I played around with bowhunting turkeys starting in

the 80’s and actually killed my first with a bow in the late 90’s.” Brown gave me these numbers reluctantly, and he made it clear that turkey hunting, or any hunting for that matter, is not about the number taken, but about the experience of the hunt. Still, I am awed by these numbers as I still cherish my handful of Grand Slams and celebrate any time I am able to harvest my limit in Mississippi.

Brown’s first turkey of 2017 came on March 22, an Osceola in the Central Florida Zone. At the time, he did not have plans to attempt a single season double world slam, but the second bird in Florida set everything in motion. The fact that Brown made his plans as the season progressed



Scott Brown and Steve Brown





*Jake Beck and Steve Brown*

made the quest much harder. His season had actually begun on March 4, the opening day of turkey season in the United States, while outfitting and hunting with Jake Beck in Florida. Brown's second Osceola came on March 23, and in between guiding hunts in Florida and Mississippi, Steve was able to help young hunter Walker Hilbun of Starkville, MS, harvest his first turkey on March 9 in Mississippi. Then on March 10 Hilbun took his second turkey (his first with a crossbow) on a guided hunt with Brown. Brown had promised the lad he would call in his first turkey several years before and, after fulfilling that commitment, he could not turn down Hilbun's request to try to get another with his crossbow the next morning.

Brown continued guiding in Florida from March 23-27 and then returned to Mississippi to focus on the next leg of his World Slam, the highly pressured Eastern subspecies. His first Eastern fell in Mississippi on April 1 with the second coming on April 7. At this point in the game, Steve began to consider a single season double world slam as a real possibility as he already had plans to outfit hunts for the Ocellated turkey on the Yucatan Peninsula and the Gould's turkey in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico. The trip to the Yucatan proved successful not only for his hunters but also for Brown who took his first Ocellated turkey on April 20 and the second on April 23; now, he began to feel the pressure of

the challenge that lay in front of him. His trip to Mexico for the Gould's was scheduled for May 14-21 which would leave him only ten days to kill two Rio Grande gobblers and two Merriam's. Brown made the decision to hunt one of the subspecies before outfitting an upcoming group to Mexico. The "when" was clear, but the "where" was still in question.

After returning with his clients from the jungle, Brown headed to Wyoming. Flying into Rapid City, South Dakota, he then drove the six hours to his destination in the Equality State and harvested his first Merriam's on private land in Wyoming on May 10. Since he could only kill one turkey in Wyoming, he then made the drive to Montana to



hunt a tract of public land he knew well, and on May 12, he harvested his second Merriam's. Brown returned home on May 12 to prepare to leave for Mexico on May 14. Making it safely with his group of hunters to base camp in the Sierra Madre Mountain range, Brown began to contemplate the reality of what he could accomplish. Sleep deprived and dealing with the pressures of work (Brown worked in marketing for a national hospice company at the time) and outfitting, he was somehow able to muster the energy and strength to harvest the first Gould's turkey of his quest on May 16. On May 18, I

texted Brown's wife Kristi to see if she had any progress updates from Steve. In her message she told me she had not heard a word from Steve. This was not strange as cell service is basically non-existent where the group was hunting. However, the remainder of her text is what really got my attention. She said, "I had this overwhelming feeling yesterday to pray for him. Not sure what or why I needed to pray. My first thought was Lord, if it's your will, let him get those turkeys." I put my phone down and said a prayer as well. Brown's second Gould's turkey came on May 18 in the last hour of daylight on the last day of

the trip. Brown said he felt the prayers as he worried on that last day that the Gould's might be the stumbling block to his quest again as it had been in 2005.

Brown returned to the states on the 19th of May, was home on the 20th, and spent the 21st catching up on work, paying bills, booking hunts, and spending time with his family. He left Starkville on May 22 driving to hunt Rio's in Kansas. Along the way he stopped to visit good friend Jim Lederbrand in Illinois. Jim had recently lost his father, and Steve spent time there consoling his friend before leaving for Kansas. On the



*Steve Brown with his Ocellated turkey from the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico.*





Steve Brown

24th, Steve rendezvoused in Kansas with longtime friends Jerry and Jake Beck. Brown had begun his quest with Jake in Florida, and now Beck was trying to finish a single season Royal Slam by getting his Rio in Kansas and then heading off to find a Merriam's. Beck was able to get his Rio on May 26, but Brown was still empty-handed. He left the Becks with time running out to fulfill his goal. Because it was so late in the season, Brown was having difficulty finding a Rio on the property he was hunting in central Kansas and began working his network of friends and fellow outfitters in an effort to locate some willing birds. Finally, with time running out, Brown was able to

harvest his Rios on May 27 and 28 on private land in Southwest Kansas.

As my wife will attest, at the end of each Mississippi turkey season I am worn out. Hunting every day possible wears on you as the season progresses and being lucky enough to chase long beards in another state only takes the sleep deprivation to another level. As I sat across the table from Brown, listening to how his double world slam quest had unfolded, I was in awe. I have never seen anything like him in the turkey woods and I suspect I never will—his talent is special. However, Brown is much more than a gifted turkey hunter and bowhunter. The skill set required to accomplish what he accomplished last

year shows why Brown is also such an effective outfitter. World records are not participation trophies. The level of stamina, networking, planning, woodsmanship, determination, and sheer will required to accomplish such a feat is, to say the least, impressive. As a turkey hunter, bowhunter, and outfitter, Steve's skills and talents have always put him at another level, a level reached by few and, in my estimation, unsurpassed by any. Now he can add to his accomplishments the title of world record holder.