

"It's an **untapped market**. ... Hunting shows are typically boring to **those who are not hunting-oriented**."

Shelly Marks, developer of a show titled "Hunting for Girls"



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Shelly Marks says she's trying to create a serious hunting show for a female audience.

Story by Jean Bonchak | JBonchak@News-Herald.com

The beautiful huntress

Having taken her shot on a reality modeling show, Bainbridge Township's Shelly Marks has her sights on a new target

Shelly Marks has her sights set on showing the world that hunting isn't just for testosterone-infused men anymore. ¶ Marks, 40, a model and actress who recently completed several episodes as a contestant on the TV Land reality show "She's Got the Look," hasn't wasted any time taking aim at her next project — a hunting show with a hint of femininity. ¶ The background of the Bainbridge Township gal who drew in audiences with her stunning good looks and dramatic interludes on the reality show, a competition for models over age 35, proves that she's not afraid to take on new challenges.

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TV Land
Shelly Marks strutted her stuff recently on the TV Land Show "She's Got the Look."

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The News-Herald

Huntress

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At the tender age of 15 she hopped on the traveling fashion show circuit modeling at shopping malls throughout Northeast Ohio.

Later, she spent time in Toyko showcasing her talent in print and television commercials. A bit of movie acting, stuntwork and theater also are part of her lengthy résumé.

Thus, the opportunity to present sport, skill, travel and technology wrapped in a new format is just the latest in what has been a lifetime of targeting new enterprises.

'Hunting for Girls'

Along with business partner Rob Davis, Marks has produced a demo titled "Hunting for Girls." The pair are shopping it to key media members hoping to hook the attention of networks.

Davis noted that they've already received positive feedback from producers in New York and Los Angeles.

Tuning in for the first time, some viewers may think they're in store for a show based on pursuing females. They'll be surprised, and, Marks hopes, retain interest, when they discover that much of the show focuses on the trend of women taking up hunting as a hobby.

Citing statistics from the National Sporting Goods Association that women's hunting jumped by 75 percent in 2005, Marks and Davis are convinced that a fresh audience awaits.

Davis said "Hunting for Girls" is the most marketable project on which he's worked because of its uniqueness.

"It's an untapped market," Marks said. "Hunting shows are typically boring to those who are not hunting-oriented."

The pair are rolling out new concepts in an attempt to prevent that from happening.

Segments such as "Cooking Wild" featuring Marks' familiarity with preparing frontier foods such as venison, buffalo and wild boar will be introduced.

"Gotta Have That" (tech gadget, woman's hunting apparel etc.) and a yet-to-be announced topic promised to deliver a "wow" factor also will be included.

Marks, who hosts the show, possesses an exuberant personality and an earthy, natural beauty that blends well with an outdoors environment.

Despite her obvious good looks and trim figure, she insists that the show will not deviate from its intended path to present a form of "Hot Chick Hunting."

Outdoors experience

Marks' fascination and familiarity with the outdoors began as a youngster during family outings spent camping and fishing.

About four years ago, while going through a divorce, the mother of two met Geauga County landscape architect Steve Kellermann, who introduced her to hunting.

The "woody guy," as Marks refers to him, took her to Geauga Bow in Middlefield, where he placed a crossbow in her hands and taught her how to use it.



TV Land
Shelly Marks, posing with a model who did promotional shots with the contestants of TV Land's "She's Got the Look," made an impression on the show but did not win.

Nowadays, she's a frequent visitor to the outdoor sports store, where, she maintains, men often approach her and say they wish their wives or girlfriends would accompany them on their expeditions.

So what's her advice to women who watch their men don camouflage gear, drive into the early dawn for the chance to bag a deer?

"Go with him and have fun," she said. "If you want to hunt and harvest an animal, fine, but you don't have to. Just enjoy the wilderness. It's hunting season. You don't want to lose your husband."

During a recent interview, she relished relating a supportive and oft-quoted statement by fellow outdoorswoman Sarah Palin, "We eat, therefore we hunt."

Bringing it to Bucksport

The huntress laughed while recounting a story about a recent trip to Bucksport, Tenn., to conduct research. Though the name of the town may draw a snicker or two, Marks said the proprietors of a 250-acre preserve located there were welcoming and helpful.

Plans are to film the show at different spots around the country and eventually expand outward to places such as Mexico and Africa.

The demo was shot at Nelson Ledges Quarry Park in Portage County.

Davis said about \$300,000 would cover costs to create the first 15 episodes.

The pair intends to staff the show with a Cleveland-based crew.

"The perception that you can't get it done in Cleveland is totally wrong," Davis said.

Shelly Marks demonstrates using a crossbow and talks about her prospective show.

At www.News-Herald.com



Kellermann is convinced that Marks has a good shot in seeing the show come to fruition.

"Once she sets her mind to something, especially when it comes to her career, she pretty much gets it done," he said. The experienced outdoorsman added that he watches several hunting shows and that they're all very similar and directed toward men. He noted that a niche for women exists.

"It seems like it's in its infancy stages," he said. "There's a stigma that hunting is for guys, but once girls take it up they seem to enjoy it. Women like the outdoors and being in nature when they garden and camp. Hunting is even more so."

Hunting aside

Marks started working as a teen for the David and Lee Modeling Agency, where she was kept busy with several assignments. A 1987 graduate of Nordon High School, she says school took a back seat to her budding career.

However, persevering with her education, she later graduated from Cleveland State University with degrees in political science and communications. An influential professor introduced her to acting.

"I loved it from the day I

started," she said.

She recently appeared with LeBron James in commercials for Vitamin Water and Nike.

Dramatic appearances on episodes of "She's Got the Look" prompted producers to tell her that even though she landed in fourth place, she was actually a star of the show and someone viewers would remember.

In line with similar comments from other reality show contestants and in defense of her "meltdowns," Marks claims that crafty editing presented scenes that sometimes veered from actual happenings.

At the show's finale party, judge Robert Verdi questioned the contestants about possible future plans. Marks revealed an interest in joining the cast of a soap opera.

Based on her reputation for displaying drama, "the room was in an uproar," she said.

Laughs aside, this is one woman who is definitely on the hunt for a diversified and exciting career.

"I love this business," she said. "I can't imagine doing anything else."

To find out more about Shelly Marks and her career, visit www.shellymarks.com.