

Xavier frosh firing her way to the top

Written by Sher Jasperse

Sunday, 22 May 2011 19:33 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 May 2011 20:02



Shooting at clay targets with a 12-gauge shotgun may not be considered a glamour sport among Carly Berutti's classmates at her urban high school. But for the 15-year-old Xavier freshman, trap shooting is a natural extension of her love of the great outdoors – so natural that she has quickly become the Metro area's trap-shooting queen and one of the top girls in the state.

A triplet, Carly has carved the most unusual path among the athletic Berutti kids. Her sister, Marisa, plays on Xavier's varsity soccer team as a freshman, Carly notes with obvious pride. Brother Gino is a football player.

"I'm my dad's hunting girl," Berutti says. "I've been hunting with my dad since fourth grade with my shotgun. I just like hunting and the outdoors."

Side by side with her father, Joe, and the family's German shorthair, she has hunted deer – with shotgun and bow – pheasant, squirrel and turkey.



At last year's freshman orientation, she stopped by a table with information about Xavier's trap shooting club. "I went to a meeting and joined," she recalls, thinking it would be a good way to meet people at her new school.

The sport is organized and sanctioned by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Xavier's club, coached by volunteers Gene Parker, Noel McCalley and Robert Prucha, has a robust 25 shooters, including 20 boys and five girls. Locally, Kennedy, Iowa City West, Mount Vernon, Solon and Vinton-Shellsburg also have trap-shooting teams.

Xavier frosh firing her way to the top

Written by Sher Jasperse

Sunday, 22 May 2011 19:33 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 May 2011 20:02

"The season starts whenever the snow gets off the trap houses," Berutti explains. It extends through the state meet the first weekend in June. At each meet, participants shoot at two sets of 25 clay targets propelled to different positions by an automatic target launcher.

As a freshman and a novice trap shooter, Berutti started the season at the bottom of the heap, she says with an embarrassed grin. "I was really, really bad. I was hitting five out of 25."

Her improvement came as fast as the clay targets. "My coaches were helping me and telling me how to stand and how to focus more. I developed my routine, which I do the same every time now."



Berutti soon began out-shooting some of her more experienced teammates. "I've been hunting for so long that it just comes naturally to me to shoot well," she explains. "It's a lot like pheasant hunting."

With the team divided into squads of five based on practice performances, Berutti now holds a spot on Xavier's top squad along with four senior boys. In her last five meets, she has finished either first or second among the girls. At the 26th annual High School Trap Shoot sponsored by the Cedar Falls Gun Club on April 30, she shot a personal best, hitting 45 targets to finish second to Kristin Kinney of East Buchanan High.

Two weeks later at the Xavier Invitational, which drew 15 schools and some 290 participants, she topped the girls' field with a personal best of 47 and finished ninth overall in the coed field. Her Xavier squad also placed first overall.

Xavier frosh firing her way to the top

Written by Sher Jasperse

Sunday, 22 May 2011 19:33 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 May 2011 20:02

Coach Parker credits her with working intently to perfect her form and develop her concentration. "I think she will be very competitive at state," he says. "She is definitely right up there in the top five in the state of Iowa."

Berutti says she enjoys the sport's adrenaline rush and the camaraderie of her teammates, who help each other stay focused during the pressure cooker of individual competition.

"I like to win and I like to be the best I can be," she says. "At a meet, I get really, really nervous. I can't sit down because I'm so nervous and excited. My heart is pounding for the first target, and then everything turns real calm and I just focus."

With three years of high school competition ahead of her, Berutti has her sights set on several goals. "I want to shoot 25 in a row," she says. That feat earns the shooter a coveted DNR patch each time it's accomplished. "And I want to shoot a perfect 50. My ultimate goal is going to college one day with a scholarship for trap shooting."

That's not possible in Iowa, she acknowledges, but several Missouri schools offer trap-shooting scholarships. Longer term, she says, "I want to work for the DNR. I just really like nature." She also professes a love for math and science, rattling off the science courses she plans to take during the next three years, culminating with AP biology.

Berutti, who also plays basketball ("I'm not the best or the worst") and has been learning karate for six years, admits that trap shooting is a mystery to her non-shooting friends.

"They don't have a clue," she laughs. "I try to explain it and draw it out, but they still don't understand. If you've never seen it, it's hard to understand. But they think it's pretty cool that I'm winning and getting my name announced on the school intercom."

For one of the top shooters in the state, there might be a little glamour in this shooting business after all.