



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

Heidi Hodder, a junior at Elmira Notre Dame High School, takes careful aim while practicing her archery skills.

Young archer hits bulls-eye with hard work

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

ELMIRA — When it comes to developing her archery skills, Heidi Hodder is right on target.

Hodder, who took up the sport less than a year ago, has already taken first place in three major competitions.

A junior at Elmira Notre Dame High School, Hodder said it was her younger brother, Howard Jr., who peaked her interest in the sport.

"About a year ago my brother was shooting in a youth league and one of my friends was up there and asked me why I didn't shoot. So then I asked my dad why I didn't shoot," explained Hodder, who added that no one could give her a good reason for not taking a shot at the sport.

The 16-year-old student said she began practicing with her uncle's bow last year, before deciding to buy her own equipment. Last November, she signed up for her first lessons at an archery range in Elmira.

"I started with the very basics such as pulling the bow back," recalled Hodder. "The longer you shoot you start to develop certain habits that the coach may have to correct."

The parishioner of St. Patrick's in Elmira noted that "archery is a little bit hobby, a little bit sport" for her. Hodder, who plays soccer, basketball and softball at Notre Dame, noted that — unlike many team sports — archery gives her a chance to excel on her own.

She also must take responsibility if she



Hodder's finger rings hang on the first-place trophy she won at the New York State Outdoor Archery Championships held in Sugar Hill.

doesn't execute properly, Hodder said.

"If something goes wrong, 99 percent of the time it is your fault. Sometimes it's the equipment's fault, but most of the time it is your fault," said Hodder.

Although she has only had a handful of formal lessons, Hodder has put in many hours at the range. She said archery is definitely a sport where practice makes perfect.

"I shoot probably an hour a day," noted Hodder. "I shoot in my back yard, and on Sundays in the summer, I shoot at different

tournaments at different clubs. I put 110 percent into everything."

In fact, Hodder's practice schedule enabled her to win three competitions this year. She clinched first place for the Female Young Adult Freestyle Limited Championship at the New York State Outdoor Archery Championships at Sugar Hill. The archer recorded the win with scores of 450, 474 and 270.

In addition to capturing first place at the Female Young Adult Freestyle Limited in Atlantic City in April, she won top honors at the Mid-Atlantic Female Young Adult Freestyle Limited in Virginia in June.

During outdoor competitions, archers shoot at distances ranging from 10 to 80 yards. Competitors shoot four arrows at 28 different targets. The highest possible score on each target is 20 points. The highest possible total score is 560 points.

Hodder said that she averaged about 16 "X's" — more commonly known as "bull's-eyes" — during each competition.

Because of her recent achievements, Hodder said she definitely plans to stick with the sport. Although she had originally hoped to compete as an archer in the Olympics, she now doesn't think that will happen because of the type of bow she must use. Archers in the Olympics must use recurve bows, while Hodder shoots with a compound bow.

The difference is that with a recurve bow the archer pulls back about 20 pounds while holding approximately 20 pounds. With a compound bow, the archer pulls back about 42 pounds while holding 20

pounds. The compound bow has a greater "let off," Hodder said.

Hodder's coach, Bill Keyes, said the young archer is progressing extremely well. He said Hodder's intelligence on the range makes her extremely accurate.

"The biggest thing is that she is intelligent and follows orders," remarked Keyes, who has been an instructor for more than 20 years.

The coach noted that archery requires discipline, similar to karate.

"It is more a discipline than a physical activity. It's all in the mind," he said.

Keyes said that after only nine months, Hodder has shown significant progress. He attributed her successes to hard work.

Hodder agreed that she has made tremendous progress. But even though she has become handy with a bow, she noted that she still likes to use a rifle when she hunts with her dad.

And even though it was her brother who originally got her interested in the sport, Hodder said her progress has made him a little wary of competing against her.

"When I first started he wanted to shoot with me because he could beat me all the time. Now I have to drag him out of the house just to shoot," Hodder said with a smile.

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