Olympic Games beckon for Kerrville shooting star
By Jerry Briggs
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Olympic shotgun shooting prospect Caitlin Barney Weinheimer. 2012 Photo: Courtesy Photo / SA

Olympic dreams hardly crossed Caitlin Barney Weinheimer’s mind as a kid growing up in El Paso.

Initially, she just loved being out in the wide-open spaces with her father.

“During dove season, I’d always be excited to get out of school because my dad would be waiting outside, and we’d just go out to the outskirts of town to go hunting,” she said.

Excitement for Weinheimer will take on another dimension starting today in Tucson, Ariz.

The 22-year-old Kerrville resident holds a slim lead going into the final phase of the Olympic Trials for women’s shotgun trap.

If she can maintain the lead, by Sunday she could be on the U.S. shooting team bound for the London Olympics.

“I’m feeling strong and really balanced, and that’s what you want,” the recent Schreiner University graduate said. “I got to spend some good down time with my family this (past) weekend. I just finished college, so it’s been a nice mental break. I feel relaxed and ready for this match.”

Weinheimer’s name is a new one to San Antonio sports fans.

In fact, the only time her name came up in an Express-News electronic archive search was June 2008 — when she was named second team All-District 25-3A in softball. At that point, she was Caitlin Barney, starting catcher for Ingram Moore High School.

She said she loved high school and softball and the camaraderie of team sports, but her passion, for the past 11 years, has been shotgun shooting.

“I’ve been doing this since I was 11. I started in the junior division and have just kept getting better,” Weinheimer said.

This represents the end of a long journey for Weinheimer, who was often the only girl in the group. She now leads the group of five female shotgun trap shooters within eight targets of one another leading into U.S. Olympic Trials, starting today at Tucson (Ariz.) Trap & Skeet Club ...

She graduated with honors with degree in communications from Schreiner University last week ... El Paso native is 2008 graduate of Ingram Moore High School.

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And it all goes back to the dove-hunting days with her dad.
Looking to improve her shot, Weinheimer showed up one day at a range in El Paso only to find the skeet facilities closed.

In response, she asked if she could join some older gentlemen in a trap-shooting session. At age 11, she hit 17 of 25 in her first session. Invited to a fun-shoot that weekend, she promptly won the junior ladies award.

“I just got addicted to it,” she said.

Sensing some possibilities, the family moved to Kerrville when she was 16 to take advantage of an Olympic-style facility known as the Hill Country Shooting Sport Center.

That’s where she took the lead in the first phase of the Olympic Trials last September. In the heat of competition, she nailed 234 out of 250 targets with her 12-gauge Perazzi.

Even though Weinheimer leads in targets going into Tucson, she may not be the favorite to win the only Olympic team spot awarded in women’s trap.

Some say the favorite could be 2008 Olympic bronze medalist Corey Cogdell, 25, from Eagle River, Alaska, one of two athletes in second place and trailing by six.

Garry Barney, Weinheimer’s father, said he is proud of his daughter regardless of what happens this weekend.

“It’s been amazing what she’s accomplished,” Barney said. “She hasn’t reached her true potential yet, either. Once she reaches her potential, there’s going to be no stopping her. Right now, she’s doing really well for what she’s up against. She’s up against competition with full (financial) support. She’s done well. It’s been a really neat ride.”

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