

MORE THAN A SPORT:

How Archery Shaped Makenzie Carmin

By Myiah Antle

At two, most kids are just developing their motor skills; they're doing things like drawing with crayons and playing with blocks, but junior Makenzie Carmin was shooting a bow and arrow.

"I picked up a bow for the first time when I was a year and a half old because my parents were shooting, and I wanted to be like them," said Carmin.

Her parents, Matt and Becky Carmin, played a big role in helping her develop her passion for archery.

"My parents have always been there to help me shoot. They taught me that having the biggest bow and the best equipment doesn't automatically mean that I'll get better," said Carmin. "They taught me to earn my winnings. I remember getting my new bow; I had to shoot a 260 out of 300. To get my new sight, I had to shoot a 270/300. Then, to get my stabilizer, I had to shoot a 280/300. It took me about a year to earn all of them together."

Carmin was also heavily influenced by her maternal

grandfather, Randy Latimer, who sadly passed away when she was just nine. And while it's been several years since he passed, his legacy lives on through Carmin.

"He helped me almost as much as my parents did. He was my cheerleader and my support during shoots. When I was struggling, he'd help me feel better. I always thought of him as my fun coach, while my dad was the serious one," said Carmin. "He was a really big part of the community and in state archery. He was a local 4-H archery coach and was a member of the State 4-H Archery Board. He was also a collegiate coach for NECC Archery (Northeast Community College) and was on the Collegiate Archery Committee. After he passed away, in 4-H, he got an award named after him, the Randy Latimer Triple Crown."

Carmin says that it's her goal to win the award, to honor all of his efforts and service to the archery community.

Even before she was able to shoot, she was attending archery tournaments with her parents, sitting under tables with blankets, and watching Backyardigans. By the time she was 2 and a half years old, she was able to shoot in her first competition.

"I started with a very small, basic, bare bow, and tiny arrows that are no longer than my forearm right now. Eventually, I got better equipment, but for a really long time, I was shooting with a bow that was about half the size I was then!" notes Carmin.

There are two main styles

of bows available to shooters: recurve and compound. Recurve bows, also known as traditional bows, are what you'd think of when someone says they shoot archery—a long wooden base with a slight curve, and a string attaching both ends. A simple stick and string, some might say. Compound bows are more complex, with cams at the top and bottom of the limbs. They have a pulley system that helps the archer keep the bow at full draw and stops at a certain point. Carmin shoots a compound bow.

Additionally, in archery, there are many different targets you can shoot. There are paper targets and life-like animal targets made of foam that help prepare archers for hunting. At archery tournaments, archers are categorized by age, gender, and equipment. Depending on the type of tournament, archers can shoot from distances ranging from 20 feet to 80 yards.

These different distances help the archers to grow and challenge themselves. Shooting closer targets helps build confidence, while the longer distance targets test accuracy, focus, and control. No matter how far away the target is, archers have to stay calm and steady with every shot.

"My favorite type of target to hit is the large FITA targets," Carmin states. The word FITA stands for Fédération Internationale de Tir à l'Arc, and FITA targets are the standard, colorful, ten-ring targets used in major archery competitions like the Olympics.

Archery requires a mental strength that Carmin has worked to master over her years in the sport.

"You have to make sure that

you always have a positive attitude. It's never about the arrow you just shot, but about how you can improve and make the next shot better. I always thought of it as, 'don't let everyone see that you're struggling, keep focusing, and make the next shot count.'"

Archery is something that Carmin plans to continue for years to come, and she hopes to continue to improve with every shot.

Carmin says, "Archery is one of those lifetime sports that even when you're a child at heart, you can still participate."

With her passion for the sport, Carmin has influenced a lot of people to get interested in archery. In her free time, she even teaches young kids how to shoot. She loves seeing little ones fall in love with the sport she's so passionate about.

Carmin says, "Archery has



Makenzie's bullseye at the age of 16.



Makenzie shooting an arrow at the age of 7.

taught me many life skills. Staying positive in tough situations, lifting others, and maintaining a good mental game when competing in any endeavor. These are important lessons that I will keep throughout the rest of my life, even if I'm just flinging arrows at the range."