



Shawn Annarelli / The Behrend Beacon
Freshman Anna Zelina is a hunter by day
and a figure skater by night.

ANNA ZELINA

GOING FOR THE GOLDEN KILL

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It is uncommon for a teenage girl clutching a .36 caliber Remington rifle hunting white-tail deer. Later that day, the same young lady is a beauty queen landing axles and flying camels on ice.

Freshman Anna Zelina can fire her rifle accurately for 300 yards, and she can stick a double lutz. You might call her a bit out of the ordinary, but she just says, "I'm a tomboy at heart."

Waking up to her father's voice at four in the morning on the first day of deer season, Anna has a 20-hour day ahead of her, from hunting bucks to pursuing perfection as a figure skater.

She and her father Francis Zelina will pick their post by 6:30 a.m. at their favorite region to hunt, Allegheny National Forest.

"Anna broke new ground in the family," her father says.

She is the first woman in her family to fully embrace the hunting experience, a Zelina tradition for generations.

"It is something special my dad and I have," Anna says. "because he doesn't have a son to hunt with."

On a regular outing, the Zelinas will patiently wait nearly eight hours for a deer to linger into clear shooting range, but game does not come by easy.

"I had one chance to get a deer this season," Anna said. "I did not get it, but sticking with it was worth it."

"We go out there and we learn about persistence, dedication and hard work," her father says. "She uses it on the skating rink, too."

For Anna, hunting and figure skating is all about precision.

"You have to be completely focused for both," she says. "Once you lose it, a deer will pass by or you will miss

the most basic move while skating." She's been there before. In a competition at Jamestown she caught her blade on the ice while performing a linear step-sequence and face-planted.

"The crowd gasped then went silent," her mother Beth Zelina said. "She had some tears, maybe more from shock than anything, but she was fine. It was one of the hardest things I've watched Anna go through."

"My mom told me you are not a quitter. I had come a long way, so I decided I needed to keep putting my skates back on."

Anna Zelina
freshman, kinesiology

Anna's tribulations on blades pale in comparison to her litany of triumphs.

"I don't know if I have a defining moment skating," she says. "I guess it was when I medaled in a competition. I was like 'holy, crap I can actually do this.'"

At twelve years old, Anna competed and placed second in her first regional contest. It was in that same year Anna found herself building unique bonds with each of her parents. She gained her junior hunting license with her dad's guidance and decided to take a serious journey into competitive figure skating with her

mother's support behind the scenes. "My mom did all of those little things that only we know about," Anna said.

"She was in the dressing room with me for every competition perfecting my costume and make-up. She was always there to get me ready to do my best."

Her mother was also there to give Anna the extra nudge she needed when the going got tough.

"As I got older I realized how much skating took away from my social life and other things like soccer," she said. "My mom told me 'you are not a quitter.' I had come a long way, so I decided I needed to keep putting my skates back on."

Her mother, looking out for Anna's best interests, said, "I wanted to see her follow through. I would be disappointed if she let go of something she loved, and now she's still doing it."

Sort of. Anna stopped competing a year ago, but she hasn't left the ice in the least.

"I'm testing my own limits and literally being tested," Anna said. "I'm also coaching younger skaters. The other day it caught me off-guard to hear a young girl call me Coach."

She's being tested to pass the two senior levels of figure skating. She has passed and obtained a medal in one of the two fields. She is still trying to capture gold in the field of freestyle to move up in status as a skater and coach.

"Passing the senior levels allows me to earn more money and responsibility as a coach," Anna said. "Coaching is something I want to do for life as a part-time career."

She believes she will pass the second test, but she has more goals in mind.

"By this time next year, I will be landing double axles cleanly, and I will get that buck."

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