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Long-Distance Affair



By Glenn Nelson
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Courtney Weibel of Rockton, Ill., is so intimate with her three-point shot, it has taken her to a national record and acclaim.

PHOTOS COURTESY WEIBEL FAMILY



[Courtney Weibel](#) is so intimate with her three-point shot, she can diagnose it rather easily when it goes astray.

"My feet aren't parallel," says the 5-foot-9 senior at Hononegah High School in Rockton, Ill., "or my fingers are too close."

Either way, Weibel knows by feel.

Just the way she could have felt a national record for successful three-pointers in a career was within reach on Jan. 30. Weibel needed five more to surpass the mark of 455, set by Nikki Tuggs of Butler High in Huntsville, Ala., in 1999. She knows immediately when the shot is really on, so when the first one went down last month against Harlem, it was conceivable the record would be hers that night.

And it was - 2 minutes, 11 seconds before halftime. Weibel, who will play next year at Marquette, finished with seven threes, in 10 attempts, during a 67-34 victory for Hononegah.

Earlier in the year, Weibel equalled an Illinois state record by splashing down 12 threes.

"It was just one of those nights when I could have thrown anything up and it goes down," Weibel says of the 12-three performance. "I usually know if I'm going to have a good night right in the first quarter, before the other team makes adjustments."

Which makes you wonder: What exactly does it take for the opposing team to contemplate making changes? After all, Harlem, the team against which Weibel reached the national record, is the same team that yielded her state-record-equaling three spree.

When teams do make adjustments, they tend to face guard Weibel and deny her the ball. When she gets it, it's over. As such, Weibel's made a lot of progress in setting up defenders to use the myriad screens that Hononegah sets for her.

"She will be such a weapon in college," says John Waring of Pacesetter Basketball, Weibel's club coach and trainer. "As one major Division 1 coach said to me, 'She might be the only player in the country next year who has to be accounted for from the moment she steps over the half-court line' into the frontcourt. The post players from Marquette must be salivating about how much she is going to make it easier for them to score."

400 Club

Most career three-pointers made

458 Courtney Weibel (Hononegah, Ill.), 2004-07
 455 Nikki Tibbs (Huntsville S.R. Butler, Ala.), 1996-99
 453 Jaime Walz (Ft. Thomas Highlands, Ky.), 1993-96
 447 Renee Roberts (Stockton St. Mary's, Calif.), 2002-05
 437 Ashley Luke (Aurora Waubonsie Valley, Ill.), 1996-99

Source: National High School Sports Record Book

It was Waring who introduced Weibel to the two-foot, jump-stop, which makes it even more imperative for defenders to stay close. It sometimes is a difficult shot for girls to master because it requires strength and stamina. Weibel tried it during the summer after her freshman year and says, "I liked it a lot because it got my shot off so much faster."

Weibel was able to get the intricate timing down because she already had a healthy work ethic. By then, she set out to make 100 three-point shots a day - usually in 35 to 40 minutes - just about every day per week. She says she will take off two days a week at most, but mostly just one. It all means that Weibel makes about 30,000 *practice* three-pointers a year.

"This accomplishment is really a testament to the work ethic that Courtney has each and every day to the game of basketball," Waring says. "The hours upon hours that she has put into making herself the finest long-range shooter in the country makes this honor so deserving. It has been a great joy for me to work with her for the past four years on fine-tuning her technique and the tempo to her shot, making it to the point that she is almost machine-like when she shoots the ball - everything repeating exactly the same way everytime she lets it go."

There could be something in the air in rural Illinois, but it's likely just happenstance that the same season Weibel sets a national record for threes, [Brittany Johnson](#) of tiny Olney, Ill., set the state career scoring record. Both are jump-shooting specialists. For Weibel, the long-distance love affair just kind of happened.

"Ever since I was little, I liked being in the gym, shooting," she says. "It just kind of evolved - moving back farther and farther. I like shooting the three-pointer. ... If it's something I have to do, or don't want to do, then it's not fun. It's not worth it to make if I don't want to do it."

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