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Sac State’s Olympic connection

To Sacramento State athletes, Stephanie Brown Trafton is familiar as the University’s volunteer director of operations for track and field. But she’s most well-known by another title: Olympic gold medalist. And she hopes to earn another gold this summer.

On Sunday, June 24, the discus thrower went to the Olympic Trials in Eugene, Ore., and qualified for the 2012 Olympics this August in London.

“This was the hardest meet of my life as an elite-level athlete,” Brown Trafton says of the Eugene competition, where conditions were wet and slippery. “I was very relieved to make it to the final round.”

Her first Olympic victory came at the 2008 Beijing Games, where she won the gold medal by tossing the discus 64.74 meters (212 feet, 5 inches). It was America’s first gold medal in that competition since Lillian Copeland’s victory in 1932.

But the 2008 Games were not Brown Trafton’s first Olympic experience. She also competed in the 2004 Games in Athens. And you could say her most important Olympic experience came as a 4-year-old when she watched gymnast Mary Lou Retton compete in the 1984 Games. Retton’s performance inspired Brown Trafton to pursue her own Olympic dream.

She was a multiple-sport athlete for several years but focused on the discus after tearing her ACL. “I was very successful and earned a trip to the NCAA finals each year,” Brown Trafton says.

She came to Sac State at the invitation of Kathleen Raske, director of track and field/cross country, to help the program and supplement her administrative experience in athletics.

While Brown Trafton was working hard as a young woman to achieve her goals, she made another discovery in her life: a renewed, growing faith in God. “Every day we have to choose to renew our faith,” she says. “I choose not to believe the hype or follow the fortune or fame of success because I know that what matters most is to love God with my heart, soul and mind, and show that love to others.”
Brown Trafton’s third Olympics will be very special because her mother is from England. “This is going to be so much fun,” Brown Trafton says. “I am so excited to compete in London.”

She also appreciates the distinction that comes with her participation in the Games. “Being part of the Olympic family that includes over 10,000 athletes – being called an Olympian – is something special that everyone respects because of the dedication and focus required to earn a spot on the team.”

For more information on Brown Trafton, visit www.stephanietrafton.com. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.

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