

Soccer, dance and softball filled her time growing up. However, today Sandwich High School senior Caroline Conena spends the majority of her time running. She joined the SHS Indoor Track team in its inaugural season as a sophomore and for the last three seasons has performed at the Atlantic Coast League All-Star level. In fact, she has surpassed most of the ACL competition and has twice represented SHS at the national level.



Having enjoyed that first season of track so much and experienced so much success, she passed on softball in her sophomore season and joined the spring track team. In both her sophomore and junior seasons she earned ACL All-Star recognition. Whether it is sprints, middle distance or distance, Conena can run them all and this spring may finish her high school career running some of the distance events for the Lady Knights.

She is a multiple recipient of the Silver Scholar Award and a member of the National Honor Society. This year she was a team captain in soccer, indoor track and will captain the Lady Knights spring outdoor track team. As a freshman she became a Peer Mediator and for the past two years has acted as president of the Book Club.

The indoor track season ended last weekend with the Nike Indoor National Track & Field Meet.

For the past four months I've been running the 600 meter, but had to choose between the 400 meter and the 800 meter at Nationals. I ended up running an 800m and while I didn't come close to setting a new personal record, just qualifying for the meet, and competing with the fastest girls in the country, was a worthwhile experience. I got to go with two other talented sprinters, Emma Riedel and Tim Reagan, both of whom have broken all kinds of personal and school records. Running outdoors this season has been challenging. The track and roads were constantly covered with snow and ice, and as the only distance girl, I had to push myself during long runs and workouts. Overall, I am proud of the improvement I have seen on team and the progression of the indoor program. It has come a long way since my sophomore year, and I am continually surprised at how well it manages to bus 50 kids up to Roxbury and raise money each year.

Are you looking forward to the spring track season?

I am very excited to start spring track. If we can recruit some more throwers the team will be strong, especially with the addition of more distance runners. Many members of the track team have been outside all winter, so running in warmer weather and around other sports teams is always a positive boost. I go from the 600m indoor to the 800m or 400m outdoor, but my coach, Stephen Infascelli, has thought about increasing my mileage and possibly putting me in the one mile. In any event, my plan is to run at states and to make it as far as I can in the post season. So much of my time in high school has been devoted to sports, especially track. I first joined the indoor team to stay in shape for soccer, and it has now become my favorite sport, simply because I look forward to running and seeing the people on my team everyday.

You played soccer for four seasons for the Lady Knights.

I have been playing soccer since fifth grade. Our travel team was very talented throughout elementary school and I was fortunate enough to play with many of these girls during my freshman and sophomore year. Every team has helped me improve as a player, from JV with Coach (Mike) McNeill to varsity with Rich Rossamando and Mr.(Dave) DeCanto. My sophomore year stands out because of how well our team got along. I will never forget beating Notre Dame Academy in a regular season game after losing to them earlier that year. It was the best I had ever seen the team play. Winning our first playoff game in overtime my junior year was also memorable. Because the varsity team lost 12 seniors last year, this past season was dubbed the rebuilding season. I can already tell however, that the program will grow stronger, with the promise of many experienced players returning next year.

You've studied dance since you were 6-years old.

In kindergarten, I began dancing, and in third grade started lessons at Sandwich Dance Academy. I went from dancing five times a week to taking one ballet class during the past two years, because of other commitments to soccer and track. Dance has always balanced my other sports, offering structure and individual attention. I am most likely a stronger dancer because of running and have dance to thank for my agility and speed. Every year the studio puts on two recitals and although I have not danced since December, I anticipate helping out at the spring show. My instructors and the girls I dance with have been an important part of my life, and they are why I make the effort to take at least one class a year. In college I would love to take a lesson to see what other programs are like.

What are some of your favorite memories from your four years at SHS?

Last March, I had the chance to run at the National Indoor Scholastic Championship with my 4x400 relay team. The Friday before the meet, Coach Infa, former senior, Dave Koren, and the four relay girls spent the weekend in New York. We stayed at a hotel with hundreds of track kids from all over the country. We went out to eat in the city, and ran at The Armory, a track with stadium seating. The teams, the times, and the building- everything was so overwhelming, but having my friends there made the trip more exciting than nerve-wracking, and more fun than any event I had ever participated in.

Who has been your inspiration?

My biggest inspiration comes from my friends, my family, and of course the members on my track team. Emma Riedel, Caroline Warren, and Emily Travers have been part of my relay for three years and have given me endless support and reasons to laugh. My dad, Michael Conena, convinced me to start running, and has motivated me ever since.

Is there anyone to whom you would like to say thank you?

I am extremely grateful for Mr. Cabana who convinced me to play soccer, for Mr. Morrissey who spent years with our travel team, and for all of my coaches in high school. Coach Infa has been endlessly committed to his runners and I thank him for giving me the opportunity to run at invitational meets and teaching me how to be a smart runner. He puts more time into the sport than anybody I know. I thank OB (Coach Mike O'Brien) for being such an intense track enthusiast, English teacher, and basketball statistic critic. Lastly, I'd like to thank my teammates, my brother, Kyler Conena, and everyone who has made the trip to Reggie Lewis to watch a meet.

Do you plan to attend college?

Next year, I plan on attending a four year college, but have not yet decided where I will go. I am still waiting to hear back from my regular decision schools, but am excited to continue running either on a team or as part of a club.