



New Mexico Activities Association Student Spotlight

Baseball, swimming, fencing, make Santa Fe Prep sophomore Kate Schiliro a girl for all seasons, plus national champion in Irish dancing - Good student, she also finds time to do volunteer work

By Arnie Leshin

If she could, Kate Schiliro would participate in track and field, dash the sprints, do the triple jump.

But when you're a girl for all seasons, as this Santa Fe Prep junior is, there's just no way to fit it all in. Springtime for her is playing on the Griffins' baseball team at a school that doesn't field a softball team.

From August to November, her sport is fencing. After that, it's competing on the swim team. And, with the volunteer work she does with her girl friends and her swimming coach - plus homework - track and field gets squeezed out.

There's no way she's trading in baseball for what is another spring sport, especially since she also fits Irish dancing into her busy schedule and happens to be very accomplished at this; a national champion in fact.

"I love all sports," she said, "but I enjoy playing baseball. It's my second year with the team. My teammates have been fantastic, supportive, and last year they even had an assistant coach work with me on throwing and hitting."

Softball, which she played for about a year, became history when she entered Prep. She had played centerfield, second base, and some shortstop. Now, she's teamed up with the boys, in right field, which is not the ideal place for a girl in the nation's pastime.

"I've done alright in the field," she said, "I have a strong arm and my throwing has improved, with the most difficult being throws to third base."

She added that her hitting has also gotten better, and in an 8-1 loss to Pecos, she batted in her team's lone run with an infield single between short and third.

"Hitting has been my biggest struggle, but the team has been giving me tips," she said.

Yes, hitting an underhand softball is not the same as hitting an overhand baseball, but Schiliro never thought of perhaps attending another school, one that had a softball program.

Her dad, Phil, is a former baseball player and coach, and when she played softball, he instructed her on hitting. When she made the baseball roster, he did the same.

"But I do learn quickly," Kate said.

Mark Bixby, head baseball coach at Prep, offered his impressions of Kate.



"She's just awesome," he said. "She started last year in the outfield and I started her this time from game one because she again showed her value in the pre-season."

"Sometimes she gets nervous when at bat, but that's normal and she's getting around it. She is a top four in mechanics of the game, and has a real good swing technique."

Growing up in the nation's capital, Kate remains a fan of the Washington Nationals and lists Bryce Harper as her favorite player. Her dad, a native New Yorker, grew up a Yankee fan, but loves all sports, especially when his talented daughter is playing, and when he thinks about the way she had to unlearn softball and learn baseball.

"My parents are most supportive," she said, "and come to almost every competition."

Under the tutoring of Coach Rob Madril, she's on a fencing squad that travels to compete against high schools and colleges, clubs and organizations, sometimes in mixed competition. They touch off from August to November.

One meet was in Colorado, about a 6-hour drive, so mom and dad brought along their two collie dogs, and off they went.

"I just love fencing," said her mom Jody, "and Rob is a very good coach. He has experience and a good reputation, and I think Kate does well in it."

Back in her day, mom's fun times included figure skating and swimming.

For Kate, when the swim season makes a splash, she does the 50-freestyle, the 200-free, the 100-breaststroke, as well as relays.

"I did have a good season," she said. "Usually, in sports, it can get real stressful, but I handled it well; even had some personal-bests in some events. I still get nervous, but I'm very competitive."

Head swim coach, Dave Caldwell, said that Kate is a tremendous girl, always active in the community and with her fellow students.

"She's always helping out the other swimmers who get stressed out," Caldwell said, "and when we travel, she's there to assure them that everything is going to be all right. She's also a very good swimmer and is the lead-off leg on the medley relay team that starts the meet."

Her grades are good, she enjoys history and English, loves to read fiction and history books, and does so either at home or on school break. Not much time for socializing, but she said she's okay with this because she has some very close friends.

She also provides time with Coach Caldwell to provide swimming lessons for disabled children via the Las Campanas Compadres program, of which Caldwell is the director.

"I love to do that," she said. "We teach things like strokes and techniques, and it's wonderful to see how the kids enjoy this."
Hobbies? Why not?

"She loves to do horseback riding," said her dad, "but she doesn't do it as much as she would like to because of her excessive schedule."

Then there are the 30 or so girls she does other volunteer work with. They call it the "Girl Up" organization. They raise funds, check out promotional videos, do a variety of other things they can assist with, and talk about various issues when they meet every Tuesday.

Kate said it is divided into two quarters, 1-2 and 3-4, and each one is compiled of a different group. Reading articles on needy people is also something that they do.

Her given name is Caitlin, but call her Kate, the girl for all seasons.