

Girls athlete of the week // The Post-Gazette's top female performer from the past seven days



Olivia Cernuto
 Southmoreland soccer

The past week: Cernuto scored the winning goal in a 2-1 victory against Brownsville Oct. 1 and had five goals in a 10-2 victory against Uniontown Oct. 3.
Check this out: Cernuto, a 5-foot-6 sophomore forward, is one of the leading scorers in the WPIAL, tallying 21 goals in the first eight games for Southmoreland. This comes after scoring 16 goals as a freshman. Cernuto helped Southmoreland to an 8-0 start after the team was 3-10 last year. Cernuto also is a talented

basketball player, averaging 11 points and making all-section last year as a freshman for a team that made it to the WPIAL Class 4A championship. She also runs track. Cernuto's brother, Zach, is the starting quarterback for Southmoreland's football team, and Cernuto's mother, Amber, will be Southmoreland's girls basketball coach this season.
Seriously, after going 3-10 last season, did you really expect this? No, I didn't. I don't think anyone expected it, really.
What's the reason? I think our

coach (Josh Pajak) is a big part of it. He's putting us in positions where we can excel. The team is a lot better this year and we really mesh well together.
You're only a sophomore, but what's the best moment of your high school career so far? Honestly, just this whole season.
Where do you think your future is? I could see it in soccer and basketball, or even track.
OK, what would you like your future to be in? Probably basketball.

Any pressure to choose one sport? Sometimes, but I feel like, whatever sport is in season, that's what I'm dedicated the most to.
Where's the pressure come from to choose one sport, coaches? Yeah, probably. They all want me to work at that one to get better.
Your mother will be your basketball coach this year. Have you ever played for her before? She's been my coach almost every year since I was little.
So, what will the rides home from practice and games be

like now? I mean, I don't think any different than when she is just in the stands.
Did you ever play any touch football with your brother and his friends growing up? Yeah. My cousins and him always played football together and I always played with them. Just in this past year, me and my brother would sometimes go to the football field and I would run some routes for him.
So, you're his practice receiver? Sometimes — if he can't get anyone else.
 — *By Mike White*

SOCCER
 SCORING LEADERS

(Through games played Oct. 4)

BOYS			
Eben McIntyre, Charleroi	22	Ryan Stantz, North Catholic	6
Anthony DiFalco, Franklin Regional	21	Ethan Snyder, Norwin	6
Rowan Kriebel, Quaker Valley	20	Jack Staley, Bishop Canevin	6
Keller Chamovitz, Quaker Valley	18	Jerzy Timlin, Bentworth	6
Elijah Cincinnati, Trinity	18	Gabe Vizlay, Hampton	6
Dane Beller, Mars	16	Donovan Woytsek, Elizabeth Forward	6
Blake Cooper, Franklin Regional	15	Caleb Yuricha, Norwin	6
GIRLS			
Carlo Denis, Greensburg C.C.	14	Kelsey Salopek, Steel Valley	28
Joey Polino, Serra Catholic	14	Olivia Cernuto, Southmoreland	21
Chase Yopp, New Brighton	14	Reneae Mohrbacher, Freedom	19
Julian Hays, Bentworth	13	Jillian Butchki, Belle Vernon	18
Rutger Randall, Keystone Oaks	13	Mary Kate Lape, Connellsville	17
Daniel Sassak, Belle Vernon	13	Reagan Schreiber, Bentworth	17
Keegan Amos, West Allegheny	12	Bella Carroto, Charleroi	16
Austin Arnold, Chartiers-Houston	12	Tessa Dellarose, Brownsville	16
Ryan Gehring, O.L.S.H.	12	Paige Kuisis, Seton LaSalle	16
Billy Lawrence, Springdale	12	McKenzie Pitts, Yough	15
Landon Mohney, Butler	12	Hannah Henn, Oakland Catholic	14
Johnny Dragsich, West Allegheny	11	Ashlyn Basinger, Waynesburg	13
Jake Guerrini, Burrell	11	Natalie Merrick, Eden Christian	13
Andrew Rodriguez, Southmoreland	11	Mallory Schreiber, Bentworth	13
Lucas Tooley, Mount Pleasant	11	Mikaela Small, Seton LaSalle	13
Andres Bordon, Kiski Area	10	Ava Wert, Avonworth	13
Ryan Edwards, Quaker Valley	10	Madeline Boulos, Deer Lakes	12
Luke Giger, Thomas Jefferson	10	Alyssa Clutter, Trinity	12
Sam Iacovangelo, Charleroi	10	McKenzie DeUnger, Charleroi	12
Cannon Kuchnick, Plum	10	Gracie Dunaway, Mars	12
Riley Kutschbach, Chartiers Valley	10	Morgan Einodshofer, Belle Vernon	12
Devin Murray, Deer Lakes	10	Mackenzie Evers, West Allegheny	12
Jordan Taylor, Jeannette	9	Sara Felder, Greensburg C.C.	12
T.J. Braun, Trinity Christian	9	Ashley Horvath, Char-Houston	12
Dom Dezort, North Catholic	9	Isabella Laurita, Belle Vernon	12
Dylan Greggs, North Catholic	9	McKenzie Leeder, Mount Pleasant	12
Michael Nugli, Thomas Jefferson	9	Emily Cooper, Waynesburg	11
Michael Sullivan, Deer Lakes	9	Elsa Gordon, Sewickley Academy	11
Zack LaVelle, Seneca Valley	9	Kystral Phouathavong, Steel Valley	11
Zach Lorenz, Franklin Regional	9	Olivia Stetz, South Allegheny	11
Tyler Nymberg, Mars	9	Lucia Wells, North Allegheny	11
Nolan Agostoni, Latrobe	8	Emily Bonelli, Apollo-Ridge	10
Evan Burry, Riverside	8	Jaquime Dermotta, Serra Catholic	10
T.J. Chern, Seton LaSalle	8	Taylor Klingensmith, Southmoreland	10
Mason Fabean, Greensburg C.C.	8	Farrah Reader, Belle Vernon	10
Micah Guevara, Beaver County Christian	8	Macrina Robb, Knoch	10
Alex Hauskrecht, Winchester Thurston	8	Natalie Beirlich, Elizabeth Forward	9
Morgan Kost, Trinity Christian	8	Ellie Coffield, Mars	9
Julian Kroger, Beaver County Christian	8	Tatum Gretz, Greensburg C.C.	9
Nabil Lahlou, Mars	8	Kaitlyn Killinger, Plum	9
Morgan Madison, Monessen	8	Julie Mohrbacher, Freedom	9
Marcelo Majano, West Mifflin	8	Gina Proviano, Plum	9
Joey Mosler, Baldwin	8	Sarah Schuparsky, North Allegheny	9
Nick Nagy, Belle Vernon	8	Alexa Taylor, O.L.S.H.	9
Joe Obeldobel, Yough	8	Alyssa Wright, Char-Houston	9
Jack Sella, Thomas Jefferson	8	Jocelyn Gratchic, Connellsville	8
Bobby Serafin, Sewickley Academy	8	Tatum Hoffman, Ligonier Valley	8
Nate Witkowsky, McGuffey	8	Katelyn Kauffman, Norwin	8
Riley Zimmerman, Norwin	7	Ashley McAdams, Deer Lakes	8
Nick Almeter, Serra Catholic	7	Bella Meder, Serra Catholic	8
Brendan Ash, Norwin	7	Jessica Molitoris, Montour	8
Vince Belice, Indiana	7	Ruby Rojas, West Mifflin	8
John Bence, Aquinas Academy	7	Saveria Ulizzi, Montour	8
Billy Christafano, Franklin Regional	7	Chloe Weiland, Butler	8
Dan Gornley, South Fayette	7	Hannah Biros, Yough	7
Jay Hessler, Freedom	7	Tessa Champetier, Bentworth	7
Robert Hrabosky, Elizabeth Forward	7	Maddie Delucio, Latrobe	7
Zach Johns, West Mifflin	7	Katelyn Ferrence, Ringgold	7
Zachary Kautter, Central Catholic	7	Soraya Gibbs, Steel Valley	7
Seth Kingsland, McGuffey	7	Neveah Hambofsky, Connellsville	7
Garrett Paxton, Freedom	7	Madison Hurst, Hampton	7
Tyler Switalski, Waynesburg	7	Samantha Miller, Butler	7
Tyler Wellman, Steel Valley	7	Anna Resnik, Elizabeth Forward	7
Riley Wirth, Brentwood	6	Jamie Seneca, Plum	7
Joe Anania, Shady Side Academy	6	Jayden Sharpless, North Catholic	7
Seth Basinger, Connellsville	6	Sydney Stahl, Keystone Oaks	7
Ben Betz, Brentwood	6	Maya Wolford, Penn Hills	7
Chris Brancato, Moon	6	Caroline Wroblewski, Mars	7
Matt Bucha, Chartiers-Houston	6	Angelina Berkey, North Catholic	6
A.J. Coma, Plum	6	Grace Billmann, North Catholic	6
Liam Dale, Springdale	6	Leah Brockett, Burrell	6
Bishal Darnai, Avonworth	6	Kaylee Elwood, Kiski Area	6
Luke Del Rosso, Central Catholic	6	Maura Heberle, South Side Beaver	6
Zach Dirling, Brentwood	6	Malia Keams, Penn-Trafford	6
Brady Eisel, Ambridge	6	Lauren Kirsch, Bishop Canevin	6
Sam Farmer, Shady Side Academy	6	Sabrina Knox, Aquinas Academy	6
D.D. Flowers, Plum	6	Ava Kovscek, Brownsville	6
Alex Hycza, Aquinas Academy	6	Natalie Lamenza, Thomas Jefferson	6
Aaron McKelvy, Indiana	6	Mia Lowry, Waynesburg	6
Liam Nichols, Hampton	6	Melia Peer, Mt. Lebanon	6
Michael Osekowski, Avonworth	6	Bella Schuetz, Ligonier Valley	6
Heran Pradhan, Brentwood	6	Mackenzie Taranto, West Allegheny	6
Thomas Ruffoon, Brownsville	6	Natalie Vlichek, Yough	6
Connor Schmidt, Seneca Valley	6		

Girls soccer notebook

Laurita family getting their kicks

By Ken Wunderley
 Tri-State Sports & News Service

It may have been a non-section match, but it had special meaning for Roland Laurita and his daughter Izzy.

Belle Vernon played host to Hempfield in a girls soccer match Sept. 30 and the Leopards pulled out a 2-1 victory.

“The match was originally scheduled for the opening weekend of the season, but was postponed due to the coronavirus,” said Roland Laurita, the first-year head coach at Hempfield. “It would have been my first official game as a head coach. I was a little disappointed, because I didn’t know whether it would be rescheduled.”

Laurita was glad the match was rescheduled, because it gave him a front-row seat to watch his daughter Izzy, a senior at Belle Vernon who is considered one of the top players in the WPIAL.

“I tried to treat it as if it was just another game, but deep down she is my daughter,” Laurita said. “Our goal was to win the game, but we came up short.”

Izzy Laurita played a big part in the victory by assisting on both goals.

“It was kind of weird playing against my dad,” she said. “He’s always coached me and rooted for me, but this time he was on the other side of the field. I’m glad we got to take advantage of this opportunity, but I wish we could have done it together.”

Laurita was not expecting to see his daughter play much this season, due to his coaching responsibilities and COVID-19 restrictions. Fortunately, that hasn’t been the case.

“I actually got to see her play four times last week,” Laurita said. “Monday [Sept. 28] was senior night at Belle Vernon and we had a junior varsity game. My assistant agreed to coach the team so I could attend. Belle Vernon also had games on Tuesday and Saturday and I was able to attend after our practice.



Matt Freed/Post-Gazette
 Belle Vernon's Izzy Laurita, left, works against Connellsville's Emma Tikey Monday at Belle Vernon.



Photo submitted

It's a soccer family for Hempfield coach Roland Laurita and his daughter Izzy, who plays for Belle Vernon.

I've also been able to see her other games on live stream, so I'm not missing her senior year."

Izzy Laurita broke into Belle Vernon's starting lineup as a freshman and scored 12 goals. As a sophomore, she was one of the top scorers in the WPIAL with 33 goals and 20 assists. Last season, she stepped away from high school competition after three games and four goals to train with the Pittsburgh Riverhounds ECNL club team.

“My decision to not play

takes all the factors out of it.” Norwin has allowed only four goals in its seven games and all came in, at least, a four-goal victory. The Knights also have four shutouts, including its first blemish Monday when it concluded a 0-0 tie with Allderdice in a Section 2 matchup.
 “We had a lot of opportunities, but we just couldn’t find that goal,” Schuchert said. “We tried a lot of different directions, too. I think this is one of those games, as a coach you try to learn things.”

Norwin
 Prior to the season, Norwin was, at best, an afterthought when it came to the best teams in the WPIAL. Now, with a week remaining in the regular season, the Knights have the appearance of a Class 4A contender.

“The way we’re approaching it is that we’re trying to be three goals better than everyone else,” Norwin coach Scott Schuchert said. “We’re just trying to dominate, which

give the body much time to recharge, which brings training and endurance into question for every squad that has hopes of a WPIAL and, potentially, a PIAA playoff run.

“I think the length of play is critical and we shortened the length of practices,” Schuchert said. “Shorter practices mean we have to maximize the time when kids are there and, I think earlier in the season, we had those two-and-a-half-hour practices but now we just want to give them proper rest.”

Norwin is also preparing for the postseason with a finale against a Mars squad that is a favorite to win Class 3A.

“It’s an unfamiliar opponent and I think that’s some of the things that we might see down the road,” Schuchert said. “We need to see teams we’re not familiar with and we’re looking toward a great challenge.”

Boys soccer notebook

South Park riding its stingy defense toward postseason

By Keith Barnes
 Tri-State Sports & News Service

South Park has been a perennial championship contender for more than a decade and this year is no exception.

Every year, it seems the Eagles find a different way to beat teams.

This season, it’s all about back-third dominance.

“We’re playing really well defensively and everything we do comes from the back,” South Park coach Jon Cantwell said. “We’re led by two senior center-backs that have been starters since they were freshmen and they have a ton of experience in the back for us.”

Those two defensive specialists, Jason Luffey and Peyton Pauline, have been such impressive stoppers it’s been almost impossible to generate an attack against the South Park goal. So far this season, the Eagles have only allowed three goals,

have not allowed more than one in a game and have six shutouts.

Luffey and Pauline are certainly two huge reasons why South Park (9-0) is among the early favorites as the regular season winds down and teams begin preparing for the WPIAL Class 2A playoffs.

“They see the game well,” Cantwell said. “And, really, everything kind of starts with them.”

As good as the defensive players are, any team that has this kind of success has to have a solid person in the net behind them. In the case of South Park, the team has two as senior Logan Thomas, the starter last year, has split time with junior Preston Cecotti.

And by split time, it’s divided up about as evenly as it can be. Each goalkeeper gets a half each game.

“We’re fortunate to have two starting goalkeepers, which most people would love to have,” Cantwell said.

