

# SPORTS

## OF THE WEEK

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By **DAN ROSEN**

STAFF WRITER

Nestled away in a quiet place all by her lonesome, Kelly Fazekas conducts her premeet ritual. The Northern Valley at Demarest junior takes out pen and paper and begins writing her script.

She puts on paper what she needs to do while in the shot put circle. She writes: "Stay calm and relaxed. Make sure you get your left down." The terminology she understands, and once she's done, the script is read time and again until she memorizes the words.

Fazekas then puts the piece of paper in her shoe so it stays with her as she competes.

It's a ritual she learned during her freshman year, and it's something this superstitious junior can't live without.

"Usually I'll go into an empty classroom, or if the locker room is quiet, I'll stay there," Fazekas said. "I'm very superstitious. I think I'm the only one that stuck with it."

"I get very emotional at meets, I have a lot of meet anxiety, and it really calms me down and gets me in the place I need to be."

With her script in place, Fazekas went out at Princeton a week ago Sunday and threw 45 feet 11½ inches at the State Group 2 meet, crushing the meet record (44 feet) by nearly 2 feet. The throw put The Record's Female Athlete of the Week third all time in New Jersey.

"It was hard to believe at first, and then it sank in, but I was still like, wow," Fazekas said. "I never thought it would happen, but we work really hard in practice, and have a really good coach."

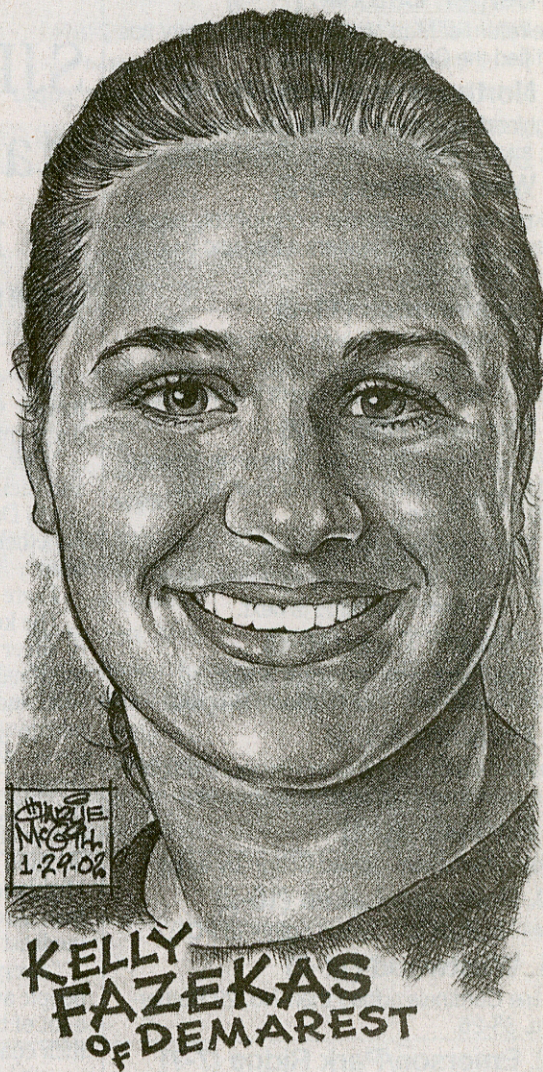
The following Tuesday, Fazekas broke the NBIL and Bergen County record at the NBIL meet at the Rothman Center in Hackensack, throwing 47-8¼. That is the second-longest throw in the United States this season by a high school girl and the longest in New Jersey in 11 years.

Fazekas, who plans on entering the physical education field and hopes to be a coach, has been invited to compete in the Nike National meet on March 10 in Maryland, and on Friday will put her talents on display at the Millrose Games in New York, where she will compete in the open division.

Last year Fazekas planned to attend the Millrose field events as a spectator, but couldn't because she had two exams that day. This year, she's not only attending, she's competing.

"It's an honor to go, my sister and I are excited to meet some of the athletes that are there," said Fazekas, whose sister Jessica, a senior, also is a standout shot putter. "I'm nervous, but at the same time I'm excited. It's something we've been wanting to go to for a long time."

She won't have much time to enjoy the moment, as the State Meet of Champions takes place at Princeton on Sunday.



### FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

**Sport:** Track & Field **Year:** Junior **Age:** 16

**Latest accomplishment:** Broke the State Group 2 record, throwing the shot put 45 feet 11½ inches a week ago Sunday. Broke the NBIL and Bergen County record with a throw of 47-8¼ last Tuesday, the second-best in the United States this season by a high school girl.

**Runners-up:** Jaime Donovan of Palisades Park and Haley Stewart of Leonia for basketball, Colleen Reynolds of Rutherford and Robin Ficarelli of Immaculate Heart for swimming, and Chrissy Procopio of Indian Hills for track.

**Nominations for Athlete of the Week must be made to the Local Sports staff by 7 p.m. Saturday. Nominations must be made by coaches, who can call (201) 646-4740 or (973) 569-7740.**



# NORTH JERSEY SPORTS

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## ATHLETES OF THE WEEK



### MALE ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

**Sport:** Track **Class:** Senior **Age:** 17  
**Latest accomplishment:** Threw the discus 181 feet, 5 inches, the best in North Jersey since 1980, at Jack Yockers Bergen County Relays.

**Runners-up:** Mike Just of St. Joseph, Pete Fabrizio of Park Ridge, Travis Tyrrell of Becton, Ted Dziuba of Wayne Valley, and David Abromaitis of Queen of Peace, baseball; A.J. Andreano of Saddle Brook and Mark Trudell of West Milford, track; and Jim Kim of NV/Old Tappan golf.

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By **RON FOX**  
STAFF WRITER

A year ago in a major meet, Steve McGovern didn't do well throwing the discus. It had grown dark as the meet's final event, the triple jump, was going on.

"All of a sudden, a discus came flying out of the dark," said Dumont coach Marty Caspare. "Steve was out there practicing. If ever there was a kid who was self-made, self-taught, and self-motivated, it's Steve."

Consider that Caspare has coached 29 years and can't remember anyone as determined. That is why he is not surprised by the latest achievement of his 6-foot-2, 205-pound senior: the longest throw in North Jersey since 1980. The 181-foot, 5-inch heave at the Bergen County Jack Yockers Relays on Saturday broke his own school record.

"But I think I had more in me," said McGovern, The Record's Male Athlete of the Week. "A lot more."

It's been a long and impressive climb for McGovern. He was a freshman hurdler who was invited by Caspare to try the discus.

"I threw 85 feet my first year, but I went out and bought some books on throwing and practiced all summer," McGovern said.

That is a typical approach for the athlete who also plays basketball. "He wasn't much of a rebounder, so he bought the special shoes and read a lot of books, and all of a sudden he was jamming," Caspare said.

"I already had the shoes," McGovern clarified. "Whatever gives me the edge."

Rutgers and Connecticut are in the running for McGovern's track services if they offer enough of a scholarship. They'd better move quickly, because more people will see McGovern this weekend. He'll be just the third Dumont athlete to compete in the Penn Relays.

The college that lands the Huskies' star will be getting the full package. His math score on the SAT is a perfect 800, and he plans to study actuarial science.

McGovern said there was extra incentive behind his throw. "I dedicated it to a boy at [Hackensack University Medical Center] children's hospital, Mario. He's 13 or 14. He has leukemia."

Dumont's four captains visited the hospital during the week, a regular practice in honor of Caspare's son, Ryan, who died of leukemia in 1994 at the age of 11.

"It was something special," McGovern said. "I always strive to do my best. My parents [Michael and Florence] are fun people to be around, and they're happy with anything I do. But I'm glad I push myself to do more."

By **DAN ROSEN**  
STAFF WRITER

Laura Conte refuses to think about college, but it looms in the near future for the Wayne Valley junior. So her decision isn't that far off.

"I know I'm [going to be] a senior next year, but I'm still a junior, so calm down," Conte said, smiling and realizing she can't say that for too long. "But I can't picture my life without sports. They have always been in my life. It balances everything because I have fun and work hard."

Conte's performance in last weekend's Passaic County Relays suggests that track and field will be a part of her college life. The Record's Female Athlete of the Week, who also plays soccer, helped the Indians win the County Relays title for the first time since 1995 and 10th time overall.

Conte ran a 16.5 split for the shuttle hurdles team that finished first, was a member of the second-place long jump (15-8) and high jump (4-10) teams, and anchored the third-place 1,600-meter relay team. She also took a victory lap with her teammates.

"We were all together, and we waited outside the van for them to put out the results," Conte recalled. "We grabbed that plaque, did a victory lap, and were chanting. A couple girls were crying. We deserved it and we know we did."

Three-and-a-half months ago, last week's success was a mere pipe dream for Conte. In late December she was running the 55-meter hurdles at Fairleigh Dickinson's Rothman Center and felt a rip in her right hamstring. She completed the event, but could barely walk and admits the pain was so unbearable it brought her to tears.

The days following were a struggle, too. Conte had to compete in the State meet the following week and regrets doing so. She rehabbed from the injury, but as soon as she took her first practice run at the hurdles this spring, she realized how far from 100 percent she was.

"I was going through the 100-meter hurdles, I completed three of them, and looked up and there were so many more hurdles," Conte said. "I said to my coach, 'This doesn't look good.' I looked at my time and thought I could walk faster than that. I knew I really had to work."

Her reward came Saturday when she jogged that victory lap pain-free while hugging a championship plaque.

"I was ecstatic and couldn't believe it, and I still can't," Conte said. "It took a lot of work to get back, but every athlete has to come back."



### FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

**Sport:** Track **Class:** Junior **Age:** 16  
**Latest accomplishment:** She anchored the first-place shuttle hurdles team, was on the second-place long jump relay team, and ran the best split on the third-place 1,600 team to help Wayne Valley win the Passaic County Relays.

**Runners-up:** Jenn Barnes of Saddle Brook and Katie Barzelatto of Tenafly for softball; and Allison DiDomenico of Passaic Valley for track.

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# ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



**MATT TRUDELL**  
OF WEST MILFORD

By **JEFF ROBERTS**  
STAFF WRITER

Scraped, bloodied, and cradling a throbbing right wrist, West Milford's Matt Trudell's season appeared to have come crashing to a halt at the Passaic County track and field championships.

Running in the semifinal of the 110 high hurdles Thursday, he tumbled over a misplaced hurdle, catching his feet and spilling all of his weight down on his hands and face.

The fall badly injured his wrist and scratched his chin, shoulder, and knee. But worst of all, it raised a troubling, albeit brief, moment of doubt.

"Usually we three-step it," said Trudell, who had won two gold medals, one in the 400 intermediate hurdles (55.9 seconds) and another in the 400-meter dash (50.7), in the first day of the event on Wednesday. "This time it was one-two-three-four steps over the first hurdle, then one-two, and I hit the second hurdle.

"It went through my head, 'I hope I don't fall again.'"

Yet with the Highlanders in a dead heat with host Wayne Hills and the County championship on the line, Trudell quickly iced the injury and competed in the semis, which were restarted. Despite being unable to rest any weight on the swollen joint, hindering his spring out of the four-point stance, he qualified for the finals.

He then posted one of his personal bests, a 15.2. It was not a first-place finish, but good enough for a silver and eight points to lead West Milford to the championship.

For his heroic performance and gold-medal finishes, Trudell is The Record's Male Athlete of the Week.

"It was great with all the drama: a senior, captain of a track team that was undefeated in dual meets and won the league meet, [taking] the County championship like that," said Trudell, who learned later in the day that he had chipped a bone in his wrist.

The 18-year-old led all athletes in points with 28, but instead of focusing on his accomplishments, he preferred to bask in leading the Highlanders to their first County title in seven years.

Trudell's bumps and bruises paled in comparison to West Milford bringing home the team championship.

"I wanted it because we haven't done it in so long," said the senior, who in the fall plans to attend Pratt Institute and study computer animation and modeling. "I've won gold medals. I just didn't want it to be about me."

By **RON FOX**  
STAFF WRITER

One of Andrea Herbert's strengths when she played basketball was getting up and down the court faster than most players, but that was not enough for her.

"After freshman basketball, I don't know why, but I wanted to run," says the Passaic Tech senior. "Basically, I wanted to stay in shape."

Cross-country and track coach Charles Weipel remembers when the idea first took root. "Andrea came into my classroom four years ago, very shy and timid, and said she'd like to run cross-country and was it OK. There was no telling how great she'd become."

Last week, the 5-foot-5 Passaic resident led Tech to the Passaic County track championship by winning four gold medals — the 200 meters in 25.5 seconds, the 400 in a school-record 57.7, and the triple jump with an effort of 37 feet, 3 inches. The fourth gold came as a member of the 1,600-meter relay with a 4:01 leg.

"I'm most surprised about the 400 because it's the one event I don't like," The Record's Female Athlete of the Week says. "The relay is more exciting."

Oddly, Herbert predicted to Weipel that she would not fare well in the County meet. "But when I won my first event, the triple jump, the first day, basically everything else fell together. Anyway, I try to win everything I'm in."

While soft-spoken, Herbert exudes more confidence than she showed when she approached Weipel her freshman year. She ran cross-country then, played her final season of basketball, and then signed up for outdoor track. She's become so important to Tech's program, she's more than an athlete. The coaches praise Herbert's work with the younger athletes and she's referred to as an extra coach.

"I hope she'll keep running," Weipel says. "And I also hope she gives back and coaches after college."

College plans aren't ironed out yet, but Herbert has a good idea what the future holds. "I know I want to own my own business; I just don't know what kind. I'll major in business like I do at Tech. There's so much I want to do; I'll just pick and choose. Maybe in the clothing industry or maybe [in] a sports agency."

Winning the County team title means more to Herbert than any individual honor.

"We [Tech] waited a long time for this," Herbert says. "We always finished under Passaic and Hackensack in the big meets. This was very important to us."



**ANDREA HERBERT**  
OF PASSAIC TECH

## MALE ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

**Sport:** Track **Class:** Senior **Age:** 18

**Latest accomplishments:** Won two gold medals and a silver to accumulate 28 individual points this week in the Passaic County championship, leading West Milford to its first title in seven years.

**Runners-up:** Will VanThunen of Don Bosco Prep for track; Bill Lacey of Bergen Catholic and Tom Travalja of River Dell for golf; Chris Collis of West Milford, Adam Loeding of Waldwick, Sean McCoy of Ridgefield Park, and Sean Ryan of Rutherford.

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## FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

**Sport:** Track **Class:** Senior **Age:** 18

**Latest accomplishment:** Herbert won three individual events and was part of the winning 1,600-meter relay team as Passaic Tech charged to the Passaic County track championship. Her 57.7-second finish in the 400 meters was a school record. She also won the triple jump at 37 feet, 3 inches; and the 200 meters in 25.5 seconds.

**Runners-up:** Tina Triantafildi of Indian Hills, Meghan Gaffney of Pompton Lakes, Jazmine Fenlator of Wayne Valley, and Clair Nowakowski of Ridgewood for track.

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# ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

By J.P. PELZMAN

STAFF WRITER

Kim Mineo is not a typical 800-meter runner. Not just in her results, but in her approach.

"I'm not big on timing and pacing myself," the Glen Rock junior said. "I'm more the type of runner who races to win. I'm a really competitive person."

In fact, Glen Rock coach D.J. Nimphius said the toughest thing about coaching Mineo is "getting her to back off a little bit. She wants to go pedal-to-the-metal the whole time."

That's exactly what she did over the weekend for the Panthers in the Group 1 girls track meet. Mineo won the 800 meters, the 400, and the 400 intermediate hurdles to help Glen Rock win the team title. Her efforts also secured The Record's Female Athlete of the Week award.

"She's full-throttle all the time," Nimphius said. "She's a throwback, and old-fashioned racer. You've got to let her run."

Many 800 runners come to the event with a background in longer distances such as the 1,600 and 3,200. But Mineo does the rest of her competing at shorter distances.

"That influences the way I race," she said. "I've got a lot of foot speed, more foot speed than the distance people in the half."

She also differs from other runners in that she doesn't run cross-country, but is a standout soccer player during the fall.

Nimphius first noticed Mineo's potential when he saw her competing as a middle-schooler in seventh grade — in the high jump.

"If she high-jumped full time," Nimphius said, "she could go 5-2 or 5-4. She is just so competitive."

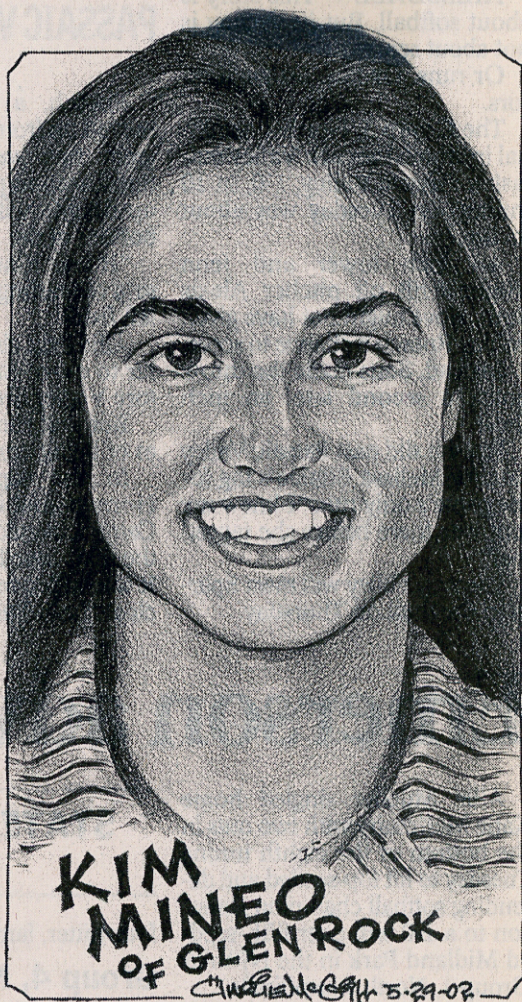
That trait will be on display again at both the NJSI-AA Group 1 meet and the State Meet of Champions.

Mineo won the 800 in the MOC last year in a time of 2:12.1. Nimphius certainly wouldn't be surprised if she wins it again, although he noted the competition will be tough.

"In my opinion," he said, "they should charge [spectators] separately for the 800 because it will be the best race at the MOC. She will be ready to go."

Next year, Mineo will be ready to go to college. But she is undecided about what she will study.

Her immediate goals are to top her personal-best of 63 seconds in the hurdles, chasing the school record of 62.4, and to lower her time in the 800. She won in 2:13.9 over the weekend.



## FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

**Sport:** Track      **Class:** Junior      **Age:** 17

**Latest accomplishment:** Set Group 1, North 1 sectional records in the 400 meters, 400 intermediate hurdles, and the 800 to help Glen Rock win the team title. She recorded times of 58.1 seconds in the 400, 1:03.2 in the intermediates, and 2:13.9 in the 800.

**Runners-up:** Meghan Gaffney of Pompton Lakes, Anike Orimogunje of Queen of Peace, and Chrissy Procopio of Indian Hills for track; and Diane Meade of Paramus Catholic and Christen Hall of Becton for softball.



# Female

By J.P. PELZMAN

STAFF WRITER

Lionel Leach has been coaching track for 16 years, and in that time he's learned not to be too impressed by what an athlete does in practice.

"You never know how good they are," he said, "until they actually run in competition."

So he didn't want to admit to himself how good a 12-year-old runner for his Newark club team could be. That is until he saw Anike Orimogunje in action at a national junior meet in Miami.

"She ran a 26.5 [seconds] in the 200 [meters]," Leach recalled. "That was faster than what some of my 13- and 14-year-old boys were doing. Right there I knew she had God-given talent."

Orimogunje hasn't disappointed. Five years later, the Queen of Peace junior is still impressing people. The Record's Female Athlete of the Week won the 100 and 200 meters for the second straight year at the Parochial B girls State track meet in Lawrenceville on Saturday, and also was on the Golden Griffins' winning 1,600 relay team.

"She's really built this team," said Leach, now the Queen of Peace coach. "Nobody knew where Queen of Peace was or anything about it. Now we have one of the outstanding relay teams in the country. People want to come here, and she's the centerpiece of that."

"It was like a different environment when I first came there," said Orimogunje, a resident of Orange. "I was the only African-American freshman. It opened me up to things I didn't know about it. I saw for myself that we might be different colors, but we're still the same people."

"She's a very sweet girl," Leach said. "She always thinks about others before she thinks about herself. Two years ago, we had a young gentleman who was deaf that joined the team. She learned sign language and became the interpreter."

But he noted that her personality is a bit different on the track.

"As long as I've known her," Leach said, "she's had a lot of determination. She doesn't like to lose."

Orimogunje's parents are originally from Africa. Orimogunje also speaks Yoruba, the native language of Nigeria, and has visited Africa.

"It was interesting seeing how life is like outside America," she noted.

Orimogunje will compete in the State Meet of Champions today in South Brunswick.

"I just want to run my best times," she said, and already is thinking about college. She is considering Temple, Brown, and Miami, although she quickly



## FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

**Sport:** Track    **Class:** Junior    **Age:** 17

**Latest Accomplishment:** Recorded a triple-double, winning the 100 and 200 in the New Jersey Catholic Track Conference meet, the Bergen Meet of Champions, and the State Parochial B championships, setting a Bergen County record of 11.96 in the 100 in the County Meet of Champs.

**Runner-up:** Jessica Fazekas of Northern Valley at Demarest for track.

added, "It's nothing definite, though. I'm just looking."

Typical of her inquisitive nature, she also is considering becoming a psychologist.

"I'm interested in human behavior," she said. "Why people act like they do."



# ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



## MALE ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

**Sport:** Track **Class:** Senior **Age:** 18

**Latest accomplishment:** Won the State Meet of Champions javelin title with a personal-best throw of 203 feet, 7 inches, the best in New Jersey this year by 10 feet. The distance placed him among the top 10 in his age group in the United States.

**Runner-up:** Bob Ferla of St. Joseph for baseball.

By **JASON McINTYRE**  
STAFF WRITER

When New Jersey implemented the use of the new, heavy-tipped javelin this season, Jim Malizia already had an advantage, but he didn't even know it.

The company from which Malizia ordered his javelins had been sending him weighted ones for two years — unbeknownst to the St. Joseph senior. So this year while fellow javelin throwers struggled in adjusting to the change, Malizia flourished.

He finished the season as New Jersey's best thrower, winning the State Meet of Champions with a hurl of 203 feet, 7 inches. For his effort, Malizia is The Record's Male Athlete of the Week.

"The new javelin was a problem for everybody else, and it definitely worked to my benefit this year."

This javelin, which, according to Malizia and St. Joseph coach Nick Nese makes the event more difficult than it used to be, actually helped Malizia. At the State Meet of Champions, he bested his previous best throw by 9 feet.

Then again, nothing has been able to stop Malizia, be it opposing defenses on the football field (he quarterbacked the Green Knights to a State championship), calculus (he has been accepted to Pennsylvania's Wharton Business school), or injuries (suffered a torn ACL and MCL in August, yet was able to play the final seven weeks of the football season).

Malizia said heavy winds in Sacramento, Calif., over the weekend hurt him at the Golden West Invitational, where he placed ninth in the javelin with a throw nearly 30 feet shorter than what he did in the Meet of Champions. It was the first national meet he had participated in.

No matter. Malizia already has done enough this season, just his third in track, to warrant a place among the top eight javelin throwers in his age bracket in the United States.

"Really, there was no stopping him," Nese said. "Every meet, it was a new school record, and then it was a new County record. By far, he's best javelin thrower in the history of the school."

Malizia has a shot at redeeming himself from the disappointing Golden West showing at the Junior Nationals in two weeks in Palo Alto, Calif., on Stanford's campus.

And he has gotten all of this done with "basically having slight technical problems," he said.

By **JASON McINTYRE**  
STAFF WRITER

Jessica Fazekas didn't have time to worry about the State Meet of Champions.

During a hectic first week in June, the Northern Valley at Demarest senior was juggling her job at a coffee house, planning for prom weekend, doing community service at Tenakill Middle School, and of course, getting ready to graduate from high school.

"It can get kind of insane," she said. "I was worried I wouldn't be focused. I went to practice, made sure I ate right and slept right, and there were no late nights."

Fazekas kept her wits about her and finished as the best female discus thrower in New Jersey and the second-best shot putter. For her efforts, she is The Record's Female Athlete of the Week.

Wednesday, Fazekas threw the discus 140 feet, 8 inches at the State Meet of Champions to win the title. Her throw ranks as the second longest in Bergen County history. In the shot put, Fazekas placed second with a toss of 42-6. Both throws were a slight improvement from her junior year, when she finished fifth in the discus and second in the shot put. Fazekas exits high school as one of the most accomplished shot/discus/javelin throwers ever.

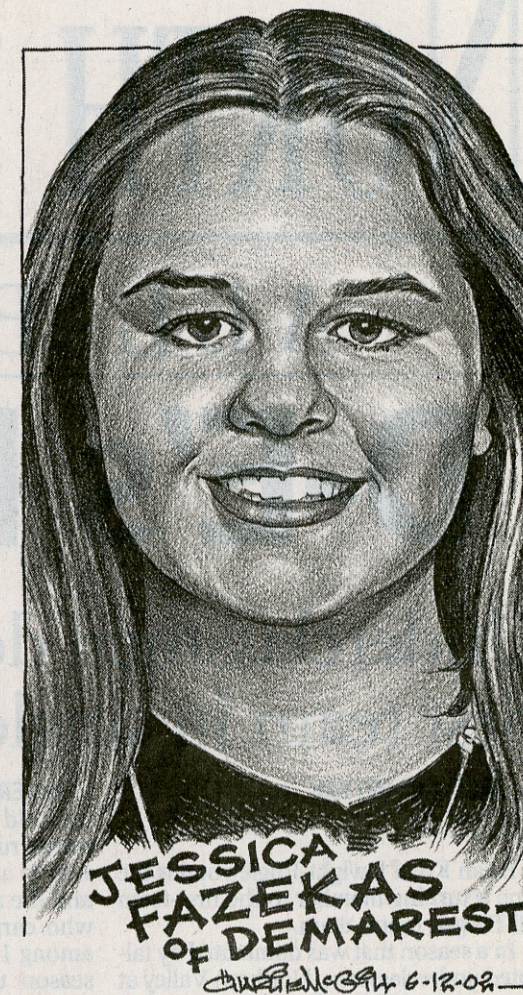
"It was an awesome weekend," she said after returning from the Hamptons on Long Island, where a party of 20 enjoyed a last high school hurrah. "It was a nice way to relax after a stressful week. I think I could have done a little bit better in the shot put at the State Meet of Champions. I think I ran out of gas."

That's understandable, and the schedule hasn't lightened up.

"I'm going to work right now and I'm running on about two hours sleep," she said Monday.

Fazekas will have all summer to rest before heading to Boston College in the fall, where she will be a member of the track team. Before heading north, Fazekas will have plenty of time to kick back and reminisce about a great year in athletics.

Fazekas also will miss volleyball, another sport at which she excelled. A 26-0 record as a senior, plus winning the triple crown (NBIL Division 1 and County and State Group 3 titles) backs that up. The track team also was successful, losing only one dual meet.



## FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

**Sport:** Track **Class:** Senior **Age:** 18

**Latest accomplishment:** Won the State Meet of Champions discus competition, with a throw of 140 feet, 8 inches, the second-best throw ever by a Bergen County female. She also placed second in the shot put with a throw of 42-6.