

Step Saver
THE OBSERVER

Athletes of the Week

To nominate an athlete, send an email to sports writer John Goralski at jgoralski@southingtonobserver.com. Include name and phone number.



Cindy Woolley

SHS girls volleyball skills camp

Reason: Selected by coaches at the Blue Knight future volleyball stars individual skills camp for her outstanding focus, enthusiasm, and improvement.

Coaches stared in disbelief as the volleyball skipped between campers like a pinball machine that was caught in a scoring frenzy. Cindy Woolley and her partner had already set each other over 100 times during a setting drill competition, but the duo kept going and going...

"We want to see how many touches they can get with just overhead passing without letting the ball hit the floor," said Lady Knight assistant coach Shannon Erasmus. "They got 167 touches. She looked very natural, and she can jump.

Oh, my goodness she can jump. I think she's going to be a phenomenal player."

The annual volleyball camp kickstarted the Blue Knight schedule last week as more than 100 girls stormed the empty high school gyms to build volleyball skills and experience under the direction of Lady Knight head coach Rich Heitz.

With the growth of the local Park & Rec program, campers arrived with better skill sets than ever before, so Heitz has been able to push them harder. Campers like Whoolley have embraced the chal-

lenge.

"She's shown improvement each day," said Heitz. "If she doesn't know what to do, she asks questions. She does exactly what you tell her to do, and she's been picking up things really easily. She works so hard."

Erasmus agreed. "Cindy's got a lot of potential, and she works hard," she said. "She's athletic and seems to be soaking up everything that they've been giving her."

For her outstanding athletic accomplishments, Woolley is our highlighted female athlete of the week.



Ryan Gemmell

2009 Governor's Cup Football Game

Class: 2009

Reason: Led the defensive assault in a 31-13 win with the first of five Connecticut interceptions.

Ryan Gemmell seemed to hang in the air like a piece of paper caught in a hurricane gale. The football danced between his fingers as he wrestled it to the ground.

On Saturday, June 27, the Rhode Island team stormed across Rentschler Field in a mad sprint toward the endzone, but Gemmell's interception turned the tide.

"I was just glad to make the play," said the former Blue Knight. "I'm glad that I did my job. I was lucky enough that it was a big time in the game, and I

got to help out my team a lot."

Gemmell was one of three players and a scattering of coaches to anchor the Connecticut sidelines during the annual interstate rivalry, but he was the first one to gain Rhode Island's notice.

"It was a game-changing play, because some momentum came back to us," said Connecticut coach Bill Mella. "They were driving, but...bam... there was Gemmell. But that's what he does, man. He comes downhill. He robs things. He appears out of nowhere."

As Gemmell's high school coach for four seasons, Mella has come to expect big defensive stops from his 190-pound defensive back. Gemmell sparked a five-turnover defense with his early play, and that was the difference in a 31-13 win.

"It was scary at first being a close game, but I'm really glad that we were able to pull together for a win," said Gemmell.

"Finally winning the last game of the year is great."

For his outstanding athletic accomplishments, Gemmell is our highlighted male athlete of the week.

TOP FEMALE PERFORMANCES

• **Lois Davis, Terri Monbaron, Diane Snow.** **Triathletes:** Teamed up to finish 127th overall (2:55:57) at the Pat Griskus Triathlon on June 20 in Middletown.

• **Jodi Valley,** **Triathlete:** Finished in the top 100 (1:37:15) at the Pig Iron Sports Lake Terramuggus Sprint Triathlon in Marlborough on June 25.

TOP MALE PERFORMANCES

• **William Lombardi,** **Triathlete:** Finished the Pat Griskus Triathlon in Middletown in 2 hours, 56 minutes, 39 seconds to finish fifth in his division.

• **James O'Rourke,** **Triathlete:** Finished the Pat Griskus Triathlon in Middletown in 2 hours, 59 minutes, 59 seconds to finish in the top 150.

Fan's Forum

We welcome letters to the editor from all of our readers. Send your sports letter to John Goralski at jgoralski@southingtonobserver.com, or mail them to The Observer, 213 Spring St., Southington, CT 06489. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday for the following week's edition. We reserve the right to edit all letters for space and grammar.

Remodeling is a project

To the editor,

As SSYAA (Southington South at Recreation Park) wraps up another season of Little League Baseball, we would like to thank the many volunteers that make our league so successful and share a few highlights.

Preparing for the season, we See SOUTH LITTLE LEAGUE, page 27



SUBMITTED

Community volunteers converged on Recreation Park for an old-fashioned barn-building project as the league remodeled its 30-year-old concession stand.

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