

Lynn Spagnesi



It's almost fitting that Lynn Spagnesi graduated high school in 1972. That was the same year Title IX was adopted, the federal law that assured gender equality in athletics.

The new law made it possible for Spagnesi to flourish and be recognized as one of the best female athletes to ever come out of Norwalk. While she was able to enjoy some of the benefits during her senior year at Brien McMahon High School, the full impact of Title IX was realized when she starred in four sports at Southern Connecticut State College in New Haven.

Born in The Bronx, Spagnesi moved to Norwalk with her family in 1965. In fact, the house she lived in on Highland Avenue was right across the street from Brien McMahon, where she would enjoy so many great athletic moments a few years later.

Her first two years there, girls basketball was still a "six-player" game with stationary guards, certain players allowed to play only defense, others only offense, and a forward "rover."

Fortunately, the rules of the game were changed her junior year and "Spags" was really able to showcase her talents. The FCIAC didn't sanction girls basketball until 1974, but McMahon played other FCIAC schools and as a junior she led the Senators to an undefeated season.

Then as a senior co-captain in 1972, Spagnesi averaged 24.2 points a game (rebounds, assists and steals were not recorded then) as McMahon went unbeaten again, finishing a perfect 10-0 and winning the unofficial FCIAC West Division title. New Canaan won the East Division and both teams were 9-0 heading into the final game, which the Senators won to claim the first unofficial FCIAC championship.

In the fall, the versatile Spagnesi also played four years of field hockey and three years of volleyball simultaneously (there was no volleyball team her freshman year). The field hockey team went undefeated her last two years and as a senior tri-captain, Spagnesi scored 15 goals in nine games.

She was also a senior captain on the volleyball team, which went unbeaten her final two seasons as well. As a sophomore, she helped the Senators win the Region 6 Sectional title and finish third in the state, losing only to eventual state champion Maloney.

Then in the spring, Spagnesi did track and field and set school records in the javelin, long jump, hurdles and shot put, while also competing in the high jump. A four-sport captain, Spagnesi broke the state long jump record as a senior, while finishing second in the javelin at the CIAC Regional meet. During the regular season, she won four events in one meet and was a triple winner in six other meets.

Spagnesi capped off her scholastic career by being named McMahon's 1971-72 Outstanding Girl Athlete.

With Title IX fully implemented, Spagnesi headed to Southern Connecticut and picked up right where she left off. She played four years of basketball, helping the Lady Owls to a regional championship her freshman and sophomore years and third-place finishes in the second and third ever AIAW National tournaments.

SCSC went to the Final Four again the following season, finishing fourth in the nation, and then came in seventh in 1976, Spagnesi's senior year. The Owls went 17-3 during the regular season as Spagnesi, a senior co-captain, averaged just under 10 points a game, 5.7 rebounds and five steals. Then during her four games in the national tourney, she upped her totals to 14 points and 9.5 rebounds a game, including 22 points on 11-of-16 shooting, 15 rebounds and three assists against Cal-Fullerton in the quarterfinals.

She also played four years of varsity volleyball in the winter, winning another regional title and leading the Owls to the national tournament in 1976 when she again served as a senior captain.

Spagnesi did track and field as a freshman and sophomore, setting new school records in the long jump, javelin and shot put, then switched to softball and played second base her junior and senior years. She also competed in AAU track and field and won the Eastern Regional Pentathlon (five events), setting a new record in the shot put.

A Dean's List student, Spagnesi was listed in Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges in 1975, as well as in Outstanding College Athletes of America

She returned to Southern as an assistant basketball coach in 1976-77 as the Owls returned to another AIAW national tournament. Her post-college career also included two years with the Raybestos Brackettes softball team and was a member of national championship teams both years.

She also played in the United State Volleyball Association from 1977-81 with the Connecticut Clippers and Connecticut Dippers, winning three regional championships and one Eastern Zone title in 1977 to qualify for the Nationals in Hawaii.

Two of the biggest highlights of Spagnesi's athletic career were when she was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in 1998, and then the Connecticut Women's Volleyball Hall of Fame two years later.

Now a resident of Wallingford, Spagnesi continued to play basketball from 1988-98 and Division A Slow-Pitch Softball from 1987-2008 in the Wallingford Recreation women's leagues.

Since 1977, she has been a physical education teacher with ACES – Area Cooperative Educational Services – in Hamden. Her Mom, Diana Spagnesi, still lives in Norwalk ... in the same house right across the street from Brien McMahon.