

Jennifer Buonerba Prescott



As a five-time All-FCIAC first-team selection, **JENNIFER BUONERBA PRESCOTT** certainly established herself as one of the city's best all-around athletes—female or male—in the late 1970s.

The 1979 Norwalk High graduate excelled on the field hockey field in the fall and shined on the softball diamond in the spring for the Lady Bears. She even played two years of varsity basketball for NHS in between. In fact, when she arrived at 23 Calvin Murphy Drive as a freshman, Jennifer Buonerba, as she was known then, tried out for all three sports and made the varsity in each.

But there's no question softball was her calling card.

"I was born with a glove in my hand," she claims.

But growing up, there were no youth softball leagues for girls in Norwalk. That was still a couple of years away.

"Tracey School was my backyard, my playground for a long time," she noted. "I had no formal training or lessons. I just loved to play."

By middle school, her talent in softball began to emerge when she joined the Norwalk Debs in the City Recreation League and was the team's second-leading hitter with a .615 batting average. The only Debs player with a higher average was Sue Eskierski, her future Norwalk High teammate and 2019 Norwalk Old Timers honoree, who batted .721. Led by the two future Bears, the first-place Debs finished 14-3 that season and went 39-4 over three seasons.

From there, it was on to Norwalk High where she was a big part of the Bears' softball dynasty, batting leadoff and playing a flawless center field on Norwalk's first two FCIAC championships in 1978 and '79. They would also be the first of Norwalk's four straight conference titles and record 11 FCIAC crowns overall.

Buonerba, a natural speedster on the base paths, was a junior on the first of those title teams and batted .440 with an over .600 on-base percentage.

"She may be small in size, but she plays like a giant," coach Ray Barry was quoted in *The Hour's* All-City article following the season.

Buonerba also covered a lot of ground in the outfield and did not make an error all season.

"Jennifer is the best outfielder in the County," Barry added.

That was the first-ever All-City team in girls softball and besides Buonerba, the all-star squad included her fellow NHS underclassmen Stephanie Seymour, Lynn Luczkoski, Missy Oman, and Eskierski, all five now Norwalk Old Timers honorees.

The Bears finished 20-3 and Class LL state runner-up that season, while in 1979 they won their first 20 games—including another FCIAC title—but were upset by Amity 2-1 in the state semifinals for the only blemish on a 20-1 season. Buonerba was again a key component, batting .433 with an on-base percentage of .604, which included 26 walks.

"Jennifer is the best leadoff batter in Fairfield County," Barry said in that end-of-season

All-City article. “She’s the one who gets our offense going and she’s usually on base when Steph (Seymour) and Sue (Eskierski) come up. Other girls get the home runs and RBIs, but Jennifer does the little things that go unnoticed.”

Buonerba started every game her last three seasons—61 games in all—and made only one error.

“She’s one of the best defensive center fielders in the state,” Barry said.

She not only made the second annual All-City team, but was named All-FCIAC for a third straight year. Buonerba was also selected to the first two All-FCIAC teams in field hockey, which began recognizing the conference’s best players in the fall of her junior year. Like softball, there were no formal youth leagues for field hockey, but Buonerba was introduced to the sport in middle school and fell in love with it.

After high school, she played one year of varsity softball at Southern Connecticut State University, while during the summer she played with the newly formed Norwalk Mariners for a few seasons before hanging up her spikes to start her family. She and her husband Ed Prescott, a former standout lacrosse player at Norwalk High, raised five children, all of whom also played sports at NHS.

And Jennifer is the latest ‘Father–Daughter’ tandem to be honored by the Norwalk Old Timers. Her father Dick Buonerba, for many years a familiar voice to Norwalkers from his time at local radio station WNLK, was an accomplished athlete who was an Old Timers honoree in 1992.

“Obviously,” his daughter said, “I inherited some of his genes.”