

Janine DeLise Deering



The high school athletic career of **JANINE DELISE DEERING** could be best summed up in just one word: Winning.

And the 1982 Norwalk High graduate certainly did a lot of that during her four years on Calvin Murphy Drive.

Janine DeLise, as she was known during her high school years, was a three-year starter for both the NHS basketball and softball teams and played a key role in the Lady Bears winning a combined four FCIAC championships and a pair of state titles.

DeLise's knack for winning, however, began before she arrived at Norwalk High. In 1975, the new Norwalk Girls Softball League was formed and a 10 year-old DeLise and the Buttercups (managed by her Mom) won the inaugural league championship. When she was 11, DeLise played in the

Norwalk Jewish Community Center Bidy League where she and future Norwalk High teammate Missy Oman were the only two girls in the league. Oman, a 2019 Norwalk Old Timers' honoree, was the league MVP while DeLise received the Sportsmanship Award. She also played guard for St. Thomas the Apostle and her backcourt mate was fellow 2022 Old Timers honoree Jeanne Vallerie DeRosa.

All roads led to Norwalk High where DeLise was a three-sport athlete who also played four years of field hockey. But her signature sport was basketball and she made the varsity as a freshman in 1978–79, joining an NHS team that made the first of four straight trips to the FCIAC finals and was Class LL state runner-up. She became the starting point guard as a sophomore as the Bears went undefeated a second straight regular season and repeated as Western Division champs, but again fell short in the FCIAC title game.

The third time turned out to be the charm, however, as the 1980–81 season saw the Bears sweep the Western Division, FCIAC and LL state championships with DeLise running the offense. Norwalk finished 24–1, their only loss coming at the buzzer in the last regular-season game against a non-league opponent. After that setback, Norwalk reeled off six straight postseason wins, including a 65–53 victory over Trumbull in the FCIAC final as DeLise scored 11 points.

Four more wins in the state tournament followed, capped off by a 79–59 victory over Wethersfield in the Class LL final as the Bears captured their first state championship in girls basketball. DeLise played a vital role in the win, finishing with nine points, six assists, and three steals. For the season she averaged 9.2 points and scored double figures in 10 games, including a season-high 18 against Greenwich. She was named All-City and All-Western Division Honorable Mention.

With three starters graduating, DeLise, a senior captain, needed to carry more of the scoring load and responded by winning the city scoring title with 14.9 points a game while leading the Bears to a 20–4 record and a second-place finish in the Western Division. Norwalk then knocked off East champ Trumbull in the FCIAC semifinals with DeLise scoring 14 points to advance to its fourth straight conference final against West Division champ Westhill.

Rising to the occasion, DeLise scored a career-high 25 points and spearheaded a gallant comeback as the Bears, down 14 points at halftime and 11 after three quarters, rallied to win 53-49 and claim a second straight FCIAC championship. DeLise, who injured her hand and left the game, returned and ignited a 12-2 run in the last 1:13, scoring five of the Bears' last eight points, including the go-ahead basket with 41 seconds to go, and was named the championship game MVP. DeLise was also named First-Team All-FCIAC as well as All-City for the second straight year and All-State Honorable Mention.

In the spring, DeLise manned another important position as the starting centerfielder for the NHS softball team. As a sophomore she batted .333 with 22 hits and 12 stolen bases for the 22-0 Bears, who won a third straight FCIAC crown and their first state championship in program history. In fact, DeLise had Norwalk's first hit in the Class LL final when she singled in the second inning against Warde pitcher Lisa Kirk, who had thrown back-to-back no-hitters. DeLise's single helped the Bears score their first run in a 3-0 win. She was named All-City and

All-FCIAC Honorable Mention.

DeLise's junior year in 1981 saw Norwalk go 17-5 and win a fourth consecutive FCIAC title, while as a senior co-captain she capped off her scholastic career by batting .310 with 18 hits and 20 runs scored in addition to playing excellent defense. She also earned All-City honors for the second time in softball and fourth time overall in two sports.

DeLise received a basketball scholarship to the University of Hartford and was the Hawks' starting point guard as a freshman and sophomore before transferring to the University of Bridgeport where she earned her degree in Journalism. While there, she was a radio color commentator for UB women's basketball, earning a *Connecticut AP Broadcasting Award*. She even did an internship at *The Norwalk Hour*, becoming the local newspaper's first female sports writer.

In her post high school and collegiate career, DeLise played in the Norwalk Recreation Women's Softball League, helping Partners' Café win the 2001 city championship. She also became an avid golfer and recorded a hole in one at Oak Hills in 2018.