

Athlete of the Year McNee raises standards

By Eliot Schickler

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Sarah McNee turned in a command performance in two sports during her senior year at Staples High. A captain for the girls tennis team before graduating in June, she was a force on the courts and for the field hockey team. In recognition for her success, she was the Westport News' Staples Female Athlete of the Year.

"That was a very big surprise," says McNee. "I'm really happy with my senior year in both sports and I had a good time with both teams."

Her refusal to settle, coupled with her work ethic, separate her from most of her peers, which contributed to her success in both sports.

"I've always been a hard worker and I always pushed myself to get better and improve myself in field hockey and tennis," says McNee.

In field hockey, she was Second Team All-FCIAC senior year, her third year as a Lady Wrecker starter. She also received the Ginny Parker award in recognition for her athletic and academic excellence, leadership, teamwork and growth.

"I was really happy, I wanted to have a better season than I had junior year," says McNee.

Possessing a lethal shot enabled her to lead the team in goals. She was the only player on her team to score in the penalty strokes Class L shootout loss to South Windsor.

"I guess it came from going to practice," says McNee. "[Former Staples] Coach [Ralph] Unker and the Westport Field Hockey developmental program helped develop my skills."

Senior year, she became as serious about field hockey as she was about tennis and joined Rapid Fire, a club team in New Jersey.

"They helped me become a better player with my shooting technique and dribbling," says McNee. "I really improved a lot senior year and not just at Staples. [Lady Wreckers coach for 2008] Coach [Sandi] Guinane helped me with my drive, which helped in penalty corners. I knew when to release the ball and it put me in good position."

Currently, she's attending Kenyon College and is playing varsity field hockey and tennis there. She's considering majoring in sociology, international studies and political science.

In order to excel for Kenyon, she has to raise her play to the next level.

"I'm definitely learning a lot from the upperclassmen and I have a lot to work on, but it's fun being on a college team," says McNee. "I hope we do well and go to NCAAs."

DeVita is confident that her former MVP will excel at Kenyon. She says, "Sarah will just continue to excel. She'll train hard and play harder. She doesn't settle for mediocrity, which is one of her assets. She's a great teammate as well."

