

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

North Jersey Female Athlete of the Week goes the distance for her team



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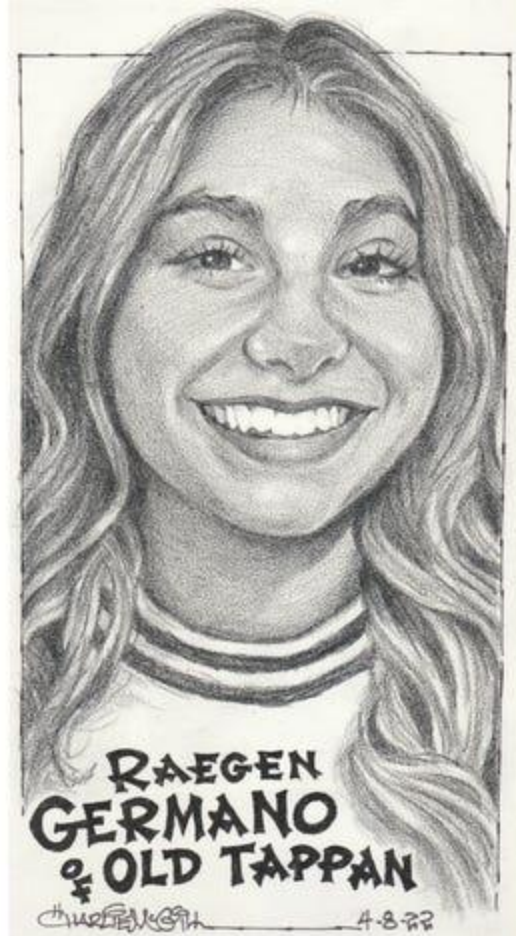


Raegen Germano went the distance in the greatest win in Old Tappan softball history. She worked even longer last weekend.

The Golden Knights senior threw all 14 innings on Saturday to help her team sweep both ends of a doubleheader. It's the most she's logged in one day, but Germano downplayed her performance at the Pequannock Blue and Gold Tournament. She had her arm wrapped by the trainer and returned to the circle two days later.

"I love it," Germano said. "I think it's really comforting being in control. I like the pressure."

Opposing batters don't know what to do against Germano (4-0) this season. The right-hander has allowed four earned runs in 20 innings, while striking out 41. At the plate, she's 4-for-9 with four RBIs.



Coach Melissa Landeck raved about how she's gone from a shy freshman to a vocal senior leader who holds herself accountable. If Germano misses a spot, she'll be the first person in the dugout to acknowledge it.

"She doesn't back down," Landeck said. "If she could pitch every second of every game, she would. She wants the ball every day, which I love about her."

Some athletes need to get a taste of other sports before finding their true passion. Not Germano.

It's been all softball, all the time, since she started taking lessons in second grade. She watched her older sister take the diamond and wanted the same experience.

Germano has committed to play at Roger Williams and credits her dad, Bob, for paving the road to the next level. It doesn't hurt to hang around a club coach and former Seton Hall baseball star.

"One-hundred percent," Germano said. "He's been my rock throughout this whole process. He has been my coach for (North Jersey Vipers) my whole life."

Raegen Germano may be best known for what she accomplished as a freshman. She took the ball in the Bergen County championship game and tossed a complete game to beat Ramsey. It was the first county title in Golden Knights history.

Germano can still look back and remember it like it was yesterday.

The big crowd. The final out. The music.

"The song *Can't Tell Me Nothing* by Kanye West was playing when we were warming up for counties freshman year, so we all play that (now on the bus)", Germano said.

That afternoon, Germano joined an exclusive club when she induced a pop fly to short right field. She became only the second freshman to win a Bergen County championship game in the circle. Steph Thomas (Immaculate Heart Academy) achieved the same feat in 2011.

"I had a lot of my family there," Germano said. "The last pitch of the game where everyone jumped on me was probably my favorite moment."

It would be easy to get complacent after all she's accomplished, but that's not Germano's style.

Landeck describes her as a student of the game who's always looking for little ways to improve. She started working with a new pitching coach this year and became a regular at CrossFit Escalate. Germano estimates that she makes four trips a week to the Northvale-based facility with a focus on conditioning and

building strength in her legs. It's given her the tools to handle an extra workload.

"She's realized the amount of work that it takes and she's gone all-in," Landeck said. "It's a real credit to her because it's a sacrifice. There are a lot of teenagers that after a couple of hours that we spend together after-school, they're done for the day. But that's not Raegen."

Raegen Germano

Sport: Softball

School: Old Tappan

Class: Senior. **Age:** 17

Accomplishment: Germano won all three games last week, allowing four earned runs in 17 innings.

Also nominated: Savannah Ring of Ramapo and Riley Sobel of Bergen Tech for softball; and Emily Danahy of Holy Angels for lacrosse.