

2012 Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame



Shelly Pfeil

When girls sports were introduced to Saugerties High School in 1972, little attention was initially given to the young ladies aspiring to represent their school on the fields and courts of competition. Tryouts were held and teams established however with no record of achievement, the pioneer teams of the early to mid 1970's had a steep hill to climb in trying to establish a base line of success in pursuit of earning the same respect held by the boys teams and male athletes. In the initial group of female athletes, there were some very talented players in those first few years, however the girls programs still lacked that one superstar, 3 sport, performer who would carry her teams on her back, grab news headlines, and bring acclaim to the Saugerties High School girl's sports programs. In 1976 that athlete had arrived in a young 9th grader by the name of Shelly Pfeil. Over the next 4 years, Shelly Pfeil put Saugerties High School girls sports on the map and established herself as arguably the greatest female athlete to ever wear Sawyer blue. Shelly Pfeil's presence in girls athletics was 'gargantuan' and her dominance in the Mid Hudson Valley spanned all 4 years of her participation in the girls high school circuit and beyond. It is with excitement and great honor that we bestow Shelly with the title of "Saugerties Sports Hall of Famer" and recognize her for her unsurpassed accomplishments and impact on Saugerties sports history.

Born March 23, 1961, Michele "Shelly" Pfeil is the daughter of Mahlon Pfeil and Barbara Gallt. Shelly's siblings include a brother Michael, the oldest, who lives in Austin, Texas, a brother David who sadly passed away in 2001, and a younger sister Barbara McDermott, who lives locally in Kingston. Growing up, Shelly and her family made their home at 52 Finger Street where the Pfeil's enjoyed the perks of living close to the bustling Village of Saugerties as well as the amenities offered by the parks and recreation facilities being developed at Cantine Field. As a little girl, Shelly recalls, "I can remember riding my bike to Cantine Field every night to watch Little League Baseball, Babe Ruth Baseball, and SAA Men's Softball. There really wasn't anything offered to girls in the line of competitive youth sports at the time, so prior to my teens, I was pretty much a spectator." Shelly credits her dad Mahlon for getting her interested in sports and inspiring her at a young age. "I can remember going to watch him play basketball and softball in the IBM leagues. He was also involved in coaching Biddy Basketball and I would go with him to my brothers games...during time outs I would run out on to the court to shoot baskets...it was hard to keep me off the court." Shelly recalls her evenings at home, "Our family was very sports oriented...we loved the Knicks and the Yankees and I would watch games on TV with my dad. If the Knicks weren't televised, my brothers and I would

listen to games on the radio while doing puzzles!” When asked about her mom, Shelly credits her mom Barbara for her “inner self” development. “When I was young, I was the typical rebellious teenager and didn’t think my parents knew what was right for me. My mom’s self discipline, her strong personality, and her inner will and determination to never give up has been passed on to me. I’m grateful for her perseverance and the strong relationship we share today.”



r-l; Shelly with nephew Keenan, dad Mahlon, and sister Barbara.

The lack of organized girls sports during the late ‘60’s and early ‘70’s however, was not a deterrent to the young aspiring athlete. Driven by an innate interest in sports and a hunger to participate, the young Shelly Pfeil quietly honed her skills on the fields at Cantine playing baseball with her brothers Michael and David and in her backyard shooting baskets with her father Mahlon. It wasn’t until 1974 when a 13 year old Shelly Pfeil was first able to participate in competitive athletics and put her skills to the test. “The SAA was my first chance to compete”, exclaimed Shelly. “As a 13 year old, I played on both SAA women’s softball and SAA women’s

basketball teams”. In that first season in the womens basketball league, the young gun anxiously took to the court and made quite an impression scoring 201 points and averaging 22 points per game, both SAA womens records. The local Saugerties community leagues, however, weren’t quite enough to satisfy the ambitions of the young gifted athlete. It was high school sports and beyond that Shelly Pfeil had her sights set on and with the establishment of girls athletics at Saugerties High school in 1972, Shelly’s excitement to compete at the next level kicked into high gear.

Shelly’s career as a varsity athlete spanned 4 years at Saugerties High School, with the talented young lady being a starter in all three sports that she participated. Beginning as a freshman and continuing through her senior year, Shelly played at the varsity level for both the Sawyers girls basketball and softball teams, while waiting until her sophomore year to participate in volleyball. Shelly says of volleyball, “I didn’t start playing volleyball until I was I sophomore. I had no interest for it when I was a freshman but a friend convinced me to try out the following year, which I did, and I fell in love with the sport! It’s actually the only sport I still play today”.



Brother Michael and nephew Derek

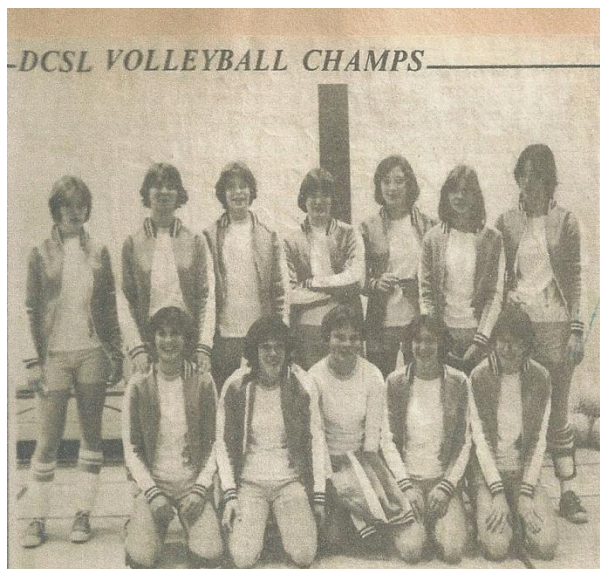
From the first day Shelly Pfeil put on Sawyer blue, she was a sensation, not in 1, not in 2, but in all 3 sports that she played. Her accomplishments as a 3 sport athlete at Saugerties High School are breathtaking and have left an indelible mark on Sawyer sports history. As a SHS varsity softball player, Shelly was selected “1st Team All DCSL” in 3 of 4 years while being named 2nd team once. A slick fielding shortstop and strong hitter, Shelly Pfeil lead the DCSL in 1978 and 1979 with batting averages of .571 and .519 respectively, finishing with a .519 career batting average at Saugerties. When it comes to memorable softball moments, Shelly recalls beating Kingston HS for the DCSL championship in 1979 as one of her most satisfying moments and icing on the cake...as would any true blue Sawyer.



r-l; Shelly, mom Barbara Gallt, and sister Barbara McDermott

On the volleyball court, Shelly Pfeil was named “1st Team All DCSL” in all 3 years she played. The lady Sawyers varsity volleyball teams of 1978 and 1979 were something special and Shelly quickly highlights those two seasons as most memorable. “In 1978 we were 17-1 and crowned DCSL as well as Sectional Champions and as good a season as 1978 was, 1979 was even better. In ’79 we were not only undefeated in match sets..we didn’t’ lose a game!” Winning the DCSL again in ’79, the Sawyer volleyball team went on to the Section I Class AA tournament losing to perennial powerhouse Yorktown Heights in

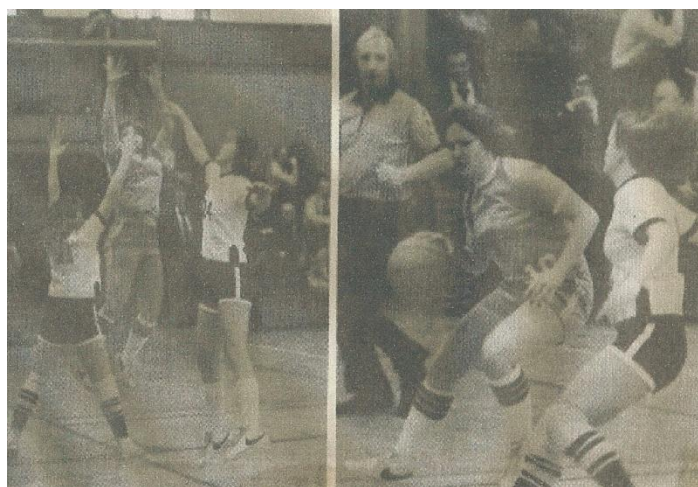
the finals. Shelly Pfeil's play that year was unparalleled, and years after, Saugerties volleyball coach, the late Andrea Ungvarsky, nailed it when she said "Shelly Pfeil is the best volleyball player in Saugerties High School history".



SHS 1978 DCSL Volleyball Champs; Shelly, 2nd row far left, along with fellow 2012 Sports Hall of Fame inductee Sharon Misasi, front row 2nd from left.

As tremendous a performer as Shelly Pfeil was in volleyball and softball, she is arguably best remembered for her accomplishments playing SHS girls basketball. In basketball, Shelly was selected as "1st Team All DCSL" 3 of her 4 years of participation, while being named to the "2nd Team All DCSL" in her rookie year as a freshmen. Additionally, Shelly achieved the lofty accomplishment of being named "Freeman Player of the Year" in back to back seasons in 1978 and 1979, becoming the first female athlete in DCSL history to receive player of the year twice, an accomplishment that has rarely been matched. Shelly Pfeil's hardnosed style of play on the basketball court made her an unstoppable force. A deadly shooter from the perimeter as well as an accomplished ball handler, Shelly was able to dominate both inside and outside. Possessing great instincts and superior skills, Shelly's double edged attack resulted in her becoming the most prolific scorer in Saugerties girls basketball history, amassing 1305 points over her 4 year varsity career at Saugerties High School. To this day, Shelly Pfeil's SHS basketball scoring record of

1305 points still stands as do most of her career stats including a remarkable 23.0 points per game average across her 4 years. With the success that she had in high school athletics at Saugerties, Shelly Pfeil could have hung up her glove and sneakers and would, at that point, been a shoe in for the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame. However, Shelly's graduation from SHS was just the end of one chapter of her storied athletic career as she now geared up to move on to bigger and better things.

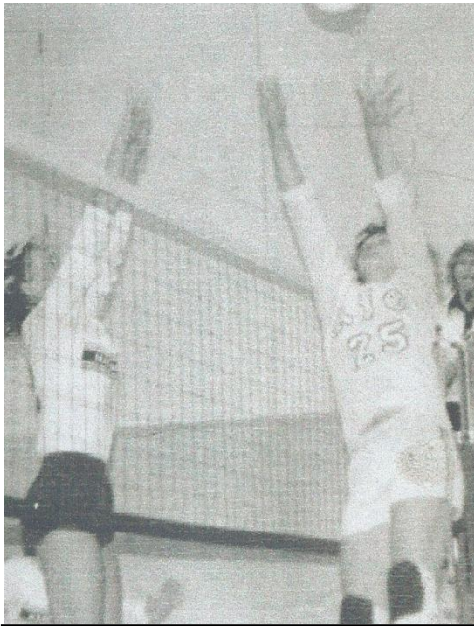


Left: Shelly hits her 1,000th point against Poughkeepsie HS. Right: Shelly drives to the hoop.

In 1980, Shelly Pfeil moved on to the collegiate ranks choosing to attend Northeast 10 Conference participant, American International College in Springfield Massachusetts. Shelly's decision to go to AIC was primarily an academic one since they offered her chosen program major (Criminal Justice), however the New England school also boasted a solid D3 athletic program which also got Shelly's attention. As a walk on the first year at the "non-scholarship" D3 school, Shelly had the fortune of AIC being elevated to a D2 program in her second year and subsequently for her three remaining years she became a scholarship athlete. For the 4 years that Shelly Pfeil attended American International College, she certainly gave them their money's worth. Participating once again in 3

sports, Shelly quickly became a star athlete at AIC earning honors just as she had at the high school level. In volleyball, Shelly played all 4 years being selected on numerous "All Tournament" teams. On the AIC softball field, Shelly was named to the 1981 "All New England" D3 All Star Team, the 1984 "All New England" D2 All Star Team, as well as the 1984 "Converse All American" D2 Collegiate Softball Team. Also playing 4 years with the AIC basketball team, Shelly admits, "Basketball wasn't our strength, so I concentrated much more on volleyball and softball".

As Shelly left AIC, she not only took with her many fond memories involving her athletic competition she also proudly graduated with honors scoring a double major, a Masters in Criminal Justice, and as Shelly puts it “I made some great friends”.



Shelly (right) in action at American International College.

As with any great athlete, battling opponents is easy but battling father time is a no win situation and after many years of vigorous 3 sport competition at the high school and college levels, the body soon wears down. “It seemed that every year after volleyball season I needed another surgery. You name it, I’ve had surgery on it. From 10 knee surgeries, to major back surgery, to rotator cuff surgery, to just last year having a total knee replacement...I’ve had 17 surgeries in all!” Although slowed, Shelly’s spirit to compete is still there. After college she continued to compete locally for years playing in softball leagues in Kingston, Poughkeepsie, and Newburgh and still today plays in the Kingston Recreation Volleyball League.

When asked about special inspirations, Shelly emotionally recalls her relationship with long time Saugerties High School Coach Andrea Ungvarsky. “Miss U. was probably the most influential person in my life”, says Shelly. “She stood by me through everything and believed in me as an athlete and a person. She was there for me in high school, college, and in my adult life until she passed away in 1999. She was the best coach I ever had.” So inspired by Andrea Ungvarsky was Shelly, that in 1985 she returned to Saugerties High

School wanting to share her experiences and knowledge, and aptly taking over the reins of the Sawyer Girls JV Volleyball team (1985-1989) as well as head coach of the Saugerties Varsity Basketball program in 1988. As the first year varsity coach of SHS girls hoop, Shelly took over a team that went 1-15 the year before, and not accustomed to being on the losing side, Shelly implemented some drastic measures to turn the program around. “My first year as SHS Varsity Basketball Coach, we went 6-9. I stressed defense and we would fast break every opportunity we got. I was tough on the girls and demanded discipline..the girls really responded to this style of coaching.” Shelly’s tough coaching style improved the Sawyer girls to 11-4 in the 1989 season and although not winning any titles, Shelly was rewarded for her good work at Saugerties by being selected Freeman Coach of the Year. What made the 1989 year even more impressive was the fact that Shelly had a very young group of players and was not expected to have any success at all and in fact, Shelly was literally coaching a group of JV aged players at the varsity level. “When I see the girls now, they tell me how much they appreciated the discipline and how they now understand what all the hard work was about...achieving success.” Shelly’s coaching career at SHS ended on that high note, as career ambitions became her priority. Shelly did continue to coach on the high school circuit in later years, doing a brief stint at Washingtonville as Assistant Varsity Softball Coach. Reflecting on her coaching career Shelly asserts, “I hope I made some type of positive impact on my player’s lives, just as Miss U. had on me. That makes it all worthwhile.”

As the final chapter of Shelly’s athletic career came to an end, she took with her countless special memories that she will long cherish. When asked about which stood out as her biggest thrills and most memorable moments, Shelly was quick to mention the 1979 SHS Volleyball team’s perfect record, the snapping of Poughkeepsie High School’s 63 game basketball winning streak, scoring her 1,000th point in basketball at SHS, and the accomplishments of her 1989 SHS girls varsity basketball team. As a hard working, mentally tough, and disciplined athlete and coach, it was no wonder that Shelly chose a post sports career in a field that required those same attributes. Receiving her Masters Degree in Criminal Justice from AIC, Shelly looked to apply her education in a fashion that would fit both her training and her personality, and in 1990 she found the perfect match. “In 1990 I started work for the Dutchess County Probation Department and was



Coach Shelly Pfeil (center) receives flowers and recognition from players Jodi Elmendorf (left) and little sis Barbara, (right) at last 1989 SHS varsity basketball game.

responsible for supervising adult offenders. In 1993 I began working in the Electronic Monitoring Unit of the department and I've been there ever since. Our department monitors offender who have been released from jail and are on house arrest. We check on them on a 24 hour basis, at their homes, at their jobs, or anywhere else they are authorized to be. I'm classified as a 'Peace Officer', so therefore I have similar powers to the police, and therefore carry a firearm, baton, pepper spray and handcuffs...thankfully I've never had to use my firearm."

Currently residing in Highland, N.Y., Shelly now devotes most of her time to her career however not being afraid of trying new things, Shelly has taken on a new found interest in learning to play guitar. "At the age of 48 and never having picked

one up, I decided I wanted to learn to play guitar. Since that decision, I've been taking weekly lessons and practice for hours every night." (not surprising). Shelly also finds a way to stay active in sports, or at least as active as one can be after 17 surgeries! The sport that Shelly became interested in last became the sport which she grew to love the most and is the one sport that she still participates in today. Each week, Shelly takes the ride up 9W into Kingston to play in the long running Kingston Recreation Volleyball League where she plays with some of the best players in the area. Although a recreational league, one can be assured that Shelly's approach and level of play have not diminished or been toned down, and each time Shelly steps onto the court we're sure that she still hears the voice of Andrea Ungvarsky giving encouragement, calling out plays and urging Shelly to give it her all. Giving anything less than her all was never an option at any point in her athletic or coaching career so why would she start now? It is with great pride that the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame Club welcomes Shelly Pfeil as a 2012 inductee. Shelly's athletic resume is as impressive as one will ever see and we are honored to celebrate her many accomplishments as well as honor her for setting the standard for athletic excellence in womens sports in Saugerties. Congratulations and welcome aboard Shelly!