

## **Plymouth North Female Athlete of the Year: Nicole Holmes**

**Nicole Holmes is both a star and a leader**

**By David Wolcott  
Wicked Local Plymouth**

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PLYMOUTH — A four-time Atlantic Coast League all-star combined over two sports, there's not much that Nicole Holmes has not been able to do in her four years at Plymouth North. It seems the only thing that's been able to hold the Old Colony Memorial's Plymouth North Female Athlete of the Year back are those pesky windows on the school bus.

"There was one bus ride home from a field hockey game in Nauset last year. It was a cold night, and the top window of the bus was open," Holmes remembers. "Everyone was complaining how cold it was, so I decided to take charge and close the window. I shut it most of the way, but I also managed to set off a horrible buzzing noise that shrieks when the emergency window is touched. So we all had to sit there and deal with this horrendous noise almost the entire ride home because of me.

"They still won't let me touch the windows on any bus."

Irritating sirens or not, Plymouth North field hockey and softball Head Coach Kim Allen was more than happy to have had Holmes along for the ride these past four years.

"Nicole's the type of a kid who is a great leader both on and off the field. She has the ability to make everyone laugh and can make any situation a positive one, but she's also able to be a true captain when she needs to be," Allen said. "She's one of the best athletes I've had the opportunity to coach in field hockey, as well as softball, because of her knowledge of the games and commitment to each of the sports."

Holmes, 17, is a four-year member of the Lady Eagle field hockey and softball teams. She's been an ACL all-star in field hockey three times (once as an honorable mention) and softball once. Ninth academically in her class at the end of her junior year, Holmes has made the most of her time at Plymouth North

"I'm not going to lie. Sometimes it's a pain in the butt to try and do everything with school, work and a couple jobs, as well," Holmes joked. "It's a challenge balancing everything, but academics obviously have to come first. My parents have always pushed me to be the best that I could be and enjoy everything that I do."

Holmes has played some ice hockey over the years, which led her to giving field hockey a shot. Coach Allen and her teammates are happy she picked up the sport.

"When I was in eighth grade at PCIS, that was the first year of the field hockey program at the school," Holmes said. "I've played ice hockey since I was 9, but high school hockey wasn't an option for me because there is no girls hockey team in town, and I wasn't going to try out for the boys team and get pummeled every day. So I decided to give field hockey try and I loved it.

"I think we won a game by forfeit and tied another that first year, but the only goal we scored all season was the one I got in that 1-1 tie. I just kind of fell in love with the game. It's a combination of ice hockey, soccer and even a little bit of lacrosse."

As a sophomore, she played more of a defensive position and was named an honorable mention ACL all-star. During the summer before her junior year, Holmes decided to put a little extra in her game, playing in the Bay State Games as well as the Cape Cod Classic Super Sophomore tournament.

Her extra work paid off on the field. Named a team captain as a junior, Holmes did a little bit of everything that year, registering a goal and an assist on the way to being named Team MVP and an ACL first team all-star.

The second-year captain added more offense to her game this fall, netting five goals for the Lady Eagles on the way to winning team MVP and ACL all-star nods once again. She was also named a winner of the MIAA Academic Excellence Award and MSFHCA Academic All-Star Award.

Wins were hard to come by at times for the field hockey team over the last four years, but it did not change the way Holmes approached each game.

“A captain should be leader both on and off the field. The way you lead away from the field is almost more important than what you do during the games. You want to set the right tone, be a leader and be a good person, as well. You want to make sure the team does well, but that everyone feels a part of the success too,” Holmes said. “Sometimes it’s hard when things aren’t going well with the team, but you have to accept things for the way they are. You can learn from any experience.

“It’s not going to be how many game we won or lost over the years that’s going to stick with me, it’s the people you played with, the good times you had with them and the memories you were able to make that are the important things that stick with you.”

Holmes has had some better luck on the softball diamond. A starter since her sophomore season, she’s led the team to the playoffs the last two years. Holmes led the ACL in hitting last season with a .484 batting average and was named to the ACL all-star team for the first time as a softball player.

She is also involved with the Math Team and Peer Leaders at Plymouth North.

Holmes is looking at St. Anselm and Boston University with an eye toward a career involving math or chemistry.

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/plymouth/features/x1882986916/Plymouth-North-Female-Athlete-of-the-Year-Nicole-Holmes>

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## **Brandon Higgins ties UMD high-jump record in his first meet ROTC Freshman sets goal for height and health**

**By Adam K. Ellis  
Wicked Local Wareham**

**Dec 30, 2010**

WAREHAM — Brandon Higgins (Wareham, MA/Upper Cape Cod Regional VO Tech HS) was named Freshman Athlete of the Week following a sensational performance at this month's season-opening Jay Carisella Invitational, hosted by Northeastern at the Reggie Lewis Track.

In his first jump as a member of the UMass Dartmouth indoor track team, Higgins tied a 16-year old school record with a leap of 6 feet, 6 inches. The mark was originally set by Sean Schofield in 1994. But with just one jump, the freshman matched the mark and qualified for the Division III, Open New England and ECAC Championships.

"It feels real good," Higgins remarked following his record-breaking feat. "When I first found out about the record, I thought about my days in high-school. There I jumped 6'6, clearing it 2-3 times. So I figured I'd be able to do it, but I just didn't think it would be this quick."

The 19-year old went on to explain that he wasn't doubting his abilities in thinking matching the mark may take some time, but more so his own health.

"For the past few years, it seems I keep getting injured. Last year, I partially tore a ligament in right ankle and I finished the season jumping off it. So there are times when I still have pain and I feel it didn't heal properly."

Despite the lingering concerns, Higgins believes he can make it to the goal he set at the beginning of the season: 7 feet. The key, the freshman says, is improving his form so he bends his body as he sails over the bar. The Wareham native's coach has been adamant in showing Brandon that his form has been flat as he sails over the bar. If he corrects it, the chances of meeting his collegiate goals should improve dramatically.

Should he make his goal, the UMD freshman wouldn't be surprised. The young man is not stranger to success, carrying a track resume that surpasses most.

Within the past two years, Higgins has finished second in the high jump at the Bay State Games as well as the 2009 International Track and Field games in Australia. With a jump of 6-5 1/4 as a junior at Cape Cod Tech, Higgins finished second in the New Englands. At Nationals, he finished 10th out of 32 competitors from across the country. And he was even part of a team his senior year that set a state record with the top score in a decathlon hosted by Bishop Feehan.

His father, who goes to every meet the youngster has, says he is extremely proud of his son but takes no credit for his achievements.

"He is just a natural athlete...a phenomenal, natural athlete," Darryl Higgins spoke of his son. "Brandon started doing track in high school and he liked it. But he didn't know much about it. Then one of the kids from Wareham High School showed him how to do it and he's loved it ever since."

The track sensation is quick to credit his father, mother and grandmother for their support, acknowledging that his mother keeps him grounded and humble. The support is certainly welcoming for a young man who may need it, as the 19-year-old recently signed up for the Army National Guard.

"I signed up for the National Guard on October 23rd of this year," Higgins proudly states. "Before I go to training, I have to go to basic. Fortunately, it shouldn't interfere with my track. I know it's a commitment but they are flexible. Even in this program, I plan on doing four years of track."

Higgins signed up for the National Guard's Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP), a program that allows him to stay in school and continue working towards his business degree. Once the degree is acquired, the UMD freshman may be required to put in his time as an active military service member, opening the potential of getting sent overseas to the Middle East.

Although Higgin's father and mother worry about the prospect of their son going overseas, they vow to stay optimistic and supportive.

"Of course as parents, you naturally worry about your kids," Darryl Higgins explained. "But it's his decision and we must support it."

Brandon and his UMD indoor track team are currently on winter break. The team will return on Jan. 15 at the Sorlien Memorial Invitational in Kingston, Rhode Island when Higgins will look to surpass his previous mark of 6'6.

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/wareham/topstories/x934187475/Brandon-Higgins-ties-UMD-high-jump-record-in-his-first-meet>

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