

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Unsung heroes: These 12 gritty girls basketball players leave it all on the court

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These are the North Jersey girls basketball players whose names don't always show up in the box score – but they always help their teams win.

They are the players whose names may get circled or underlined in a reporter's notebook after they make a key defensive play or feed a teammate for a wide-open basket.

As we step into the 2021-22 season, NorthJersey.com is recognizing a dozen seniors who are "unsung heroes". Their leadership, unselfishness and effort earn praise from their coaches and the utmost respect from spectators.

Gabby Angelucci, Eastern Christian

The 5-foot-8 senior forward led the Eagles in blocks last season while averaging just over 4 points per game, earning All-Passaic County honorable mention in the process. This year, she is one of the senior leaders on a relatively young team, and she continues to provide heart and hustle.

"She is our best screener and interior passer," coach Barry Veenstra said, "as well as our team organizer on the court."

Shea Broderick, Park Ridge

While the Owls have employed several strong post players over the past few years, this 5-foot-7 small forward has gone about her business of passing and defending with little fanfare. The senior had 42 points in her first three varsity seasons, then scored 24 in her first five games this winter.

"She is a quiet kid, but she sets a great example in practice every day, and in games," coach Ryan Dennis said.

Erin Clark, Wayne Valley

The senior forward averaged 5.5 points for a squad that won 13 of 15 games last winter and has designs on recapturing the Passaic County Tournament title. Her key contributions include rebounding and finding open shooters (2.0 assist average) passing from the paint.

Clark even showed a bit of range in the season opener, draining a pair of 3-pointers against Immaculate Heart.

Emily Clune, Old Tappan

The Golden Knights have a legacy of tenacious defenders, and this fourth-year varsity regular is right there with the best of them. Although Clune averages fewer than two points per game, the players she guards seldom score much more.

"She epitomizes what we want as Old Tappan basketball players," coach Brian Dunn said. "Grit, toughness, relentless effort and team-first mentality."

Dakota Corey, Saddle River Day

An "unsung hero" on the No. 1 team in North Jersey? Yup. It's sometimes easy to get lost in the shuffle when playing alongside a trio of Division I commitments, but Corey's efforts were recognized by coaches who selected her to last winter's All-Bergen County first team.

The senior guard is averaging around 7 points per game this season and has augmented her scoring with strong rebounding (5.3 career average) and defense (2.3 steals per game).

Maryann Gesmundo, Bogota

The senior guard and captain helped the Bucs to their first winning season in a decade last year, and her presence is even more crucial this winter since the team's top scorer transferred.

A four-year starter, Gesmundo nets just over 6 points per game and averaged 5.0 rebounds, assists and steals in Bogota's first two games this season. She was named to the all-division second team a year ago.

Sabrina Hirsch, Pascack Valley

Hirsch missed her entire junior season due to a leg injury after playing in 24 of 28 games for the Panthers as a sophomore. She carries 13 career points into her senior season, but the forward makes a big impact with her low-post defense and rebounding, in addition to being a vocal leader.

"Her voice reminds all of us to be accountable and accept responsibility for ourselves and our teammates," coach Jeff Jasper said. "She's been dearly missed."

Korie Mangler, Waldwick

The Warriors traditionally are a team that likes to spread the ball around, and she is the point guard for their offense. After averaging 3.4 points per game last season, new coach Greg McBain is looking for her to shoot more while still maintaining her defensive intensity.

"She is our defensive beast and causes havoc in the full-court press," McBain said. "She is like another coach on the floor, too."

Sofia Morino, Ridgewood

A varsity newcomer, the sophomore netted nine points in her first three varsity games but more than doubled that output in rebounding (6.7 per game). Morino is usually the Maroons' first girl off the bench and is in the game by the end of the first quarter.