

Sports

Golden leaves her mark on HCHS

BY ABBY HOOVEN

Meg Golden seemed to do it all.

The recent Henry County graduate was highly involved in varsity athletics, participating in five sports this past year, including three within the fall months alone.

If she wasn't at a practice, game or meet, Golden could be found performing her duties as FFA president at a meeting or event.

On the rare occasion her extracurriculars eased and she had an afternoon off, Golden would often stick around the high school to chat with her teachers because she was used to staying for hours beyond the final bell.

Balancing a busy schedule is tough for anyone, but Golden found a way to do it all and leave a positive impact on HCHS.

"So many people say, 'That Meg, she's special, there is just something different about her,'" said HCHS agriculture teacher and FFA advisor Lindsey Davie.

During her senior year, Golden had the opportunity to play golf, cross country and soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter and track in the spring.

She also played softball for most of her life before stepping away after her sophomore season.

"I played softball since I could really hold a bat and walk, but I guess I was burned out of it," said Golden.

She was mainly a utility player for the Lady Cats but grew up playing in the infield. In her final season, she helped Henry County's softball team win the Eighth Region title and advance to the state tournament.

"I was in the dugout cheering mostly, but it was a good year," said



Above: Meg Golden receives her diploma from Henry County Public Schools superintendent Jim Masters on May 27.



Left: Meg Golden started her cross country career in elementary school and finished with a trip to the Class 2A state meet in October.

Photos by Abby Hooven

Golden. "It was a good ending point, I guess, for my softball career."

Her cross country journey began in elementary school and concluded with a trip to the Class 2A State Cross County Championship in October 2022.

Golden had a unique chance to have her father, Shawn, as her cross country coach, but he also served as her coach in other sports throughout her life.

"I don't know how else

it'd be, really, without him there," said Golden. "It's not my main sport, but he still pushed me and sometimes would get on my nerves, but it'd be something that I would need."

Along with cross country and golf, Golden joined the Lady Cat soccer team toward the end of the season with fellow golf teammates Emily Herbert and Holly Hosey.

Playing soccer started out as a joke at the beginning of the year

but became a reality as the Lady Cats switched

coaches and needed extra players. Though, she didn't go in completely blind to the sport, having some previous experience from elementary school and youth leagues.

"I wasn't terrible at

it, but I obviously didn't know what I was doing. I was just kind of kicking the ball," said Golden.

She transitioned from a busy fall to basketball in the winter, helping the Lady Cats to a district semifinal appearance and a win over Oldham County near the end of the regular season for the team's first victory over the Lady Colonels in 25 years.

Golden played a key role in rebuilding the program and taking the team to its first regional appearance since 2014 during the 2021-22 season.

Aside from the record books and basketball skills improving, Golden helped the culture of the program shift and set the younger players up for success going forward.

"Just having a high school environment in which we know the right words to say, how to push each other and not have the bad place where people don't want to go has been very encouraging," said Golden.

Basketball runs in the Golden family too, as her mother, Sarah, played for HCHS and her brother, Mike, is currently involved with the boys program.

"It was just fun to talk with her and hear what it was like whenever she was in high school and how it's grown from then," said Golden.

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GOLDEN

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In the spring, she completed her second track season after joining the team her junior year. She excelled in the distance events and tried out hurdles later in the season, but she also helped compete in Henry County's first year of unified competition. She teamed up with Pedro Pineda for the unified 2x50 meter relay.

"It was so much fun. Pedro is a hoot," said Golden. "I got the privilege of working with him as a peer tutor the first semester of school and I just got to learn about his little quirks and then I put that into the track season and it was a bunch of fun."

Golden's inclusivity helps her stand out from others as well, Davie noted.

"She is kind and inclusive to everyone and that is one thing that makes her such a great leader," said Davie. "Her prom date was McKinley Paynter, our favorite little football player."

Outside of athletics, Golden was also an active member of FFA. Her interest began with her cousins and older sisters, who were members of the organization in high school.

"I just knew going through elementary school and middle school, going to all the banquets, that was where I was going to be throughout my high school career," said Golden.

Golden was unable to join FFA her freshman year as she was not in an agriculture class, but once she got involved the following year, she fully jumped into the opportunities available to her. She elevated to the role of reporter as a junior before serving as president and a regional officer this year.

As a result, she will receive her Kentucky FFA degree as a culmination of four years of active involvement.

Golden said she didn't have adequate knowledge in certain areas of agriculture, including horticulture, raising cattle, etc., to excel at some of the FFA contest categories. Thus, she pivoted to speaking contests.



Abby Hooven

Meg Golden shoots a three during Henry County's district win over Trimble County in February. Golden played five years with the Lady Cats.



Photo submitted

Meg Golden teamed up with Pedro Pineda for the unified 2x50 meter relay during track season.

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— Lindsey Davie

HCHS agriculture teacher and FFA advisor

In her first contest, she placed fourth in the state in the FFA Creed. To prepare, Golden practiced the creed repeatedly with Davie.

"I was super nervous, but it was a lot of fun. It took me out of my comfort zone and made me a little bit of a better speaker," said Golden.

With a full slate of athletic commitments, Golden was able to stay active in FFA in part by Davie's schedule planning.

"We have so many great athletes at school that we work our FFA schedule around them. Officer meetings and practices are in the mornings, and we check game schedules when planning events," said Davie.

Golden also served as the chair of the parliamentary procedure team, which met twice a week for several months in the morning.

"She could probably chair any meeting in the county now," said Davie.

For her athletic and academic accomplishments, Meg Golden received

the Outstanding Senior Female and the Bev Parrish Award at Henry County's senior awards night near the end of the school year.

"I was kind of shocked," said Golden. "There's a lot of great people at Henry County."

Earning both awards is uncommon, but Golden had her eyes set at least on the outstanding athlete award.

"I've always wanted to win the athlete award because my sister won it when she was a senior, and it's kind of been my goal since I was in the sixth grade," said Golden. "I was really excited about that one."

After receiving other awards throughout the night, Golden shared that she appreciated the honor of Outstanding Senior Female, but humbly thought other students would have been just as qualified to earn the award.

With all her accolades and extracurriculars, Golden has remained poised and takes on each

task with a smile on her face.

"She always has somewhere to be and something to do because of everything she is involved in, but she never appears rushed or anxious about the next event. She takes each moment and fully lives it, focusing on where she is at that moment," said Davie.

Davie is just one testimony of presumably many individuals who have experienced Golden's "heart of gold" in her time at HCHS.

"She is always herself. I see so many students who waste time and energy on what people think about them. Not Meg and it's worked just fine."

Golden credits her faith for keeping her routine, and character, in check as times get hectic.

"I think my relationship with God really helps, knowing that my plan for my life isn't my own, but God has it under control," said Golden. "Spending time in my Bible each morning really helps me take a deep breath and just give all my worries and stress to him throughout the day."

The importance of her routine was noticeable during senior week, as Golden was out and about at various events and was unable to stick to her typical structure.

"I didn't get a lot of sleep. I'm not being

patient. It was very evident to how my routine works and how important it is to be positive, to spend time with the Lord in the morning and to be patient with people," said Golden.

Golden incorporated her faith into her activities as well. Before each basketball practice, a player would share a Bible verse and relate it back to what the team was going through, and prayers before and after games were a common occurrence.

Now that the hustle and bustle of senior year has concluded, Golden will have a few months off before heading to Western Kentucky University in the fall to study education.

Yet, before she travels to Bowling Green to begin the next chapter of her journey, Golden took time to share her appreciation for some of her biggest supporters at Henry County, including Davie, track coach Leah Klempner, Spanish teacher Courtney Willis, basketball coach Jim Hook, choir teacher and senior sponsor Ashley Sweeney and more.

Most of all, Golden became emotional sharing how her parents have impacted her life.

"They've helped me when growing up see what's right and what's wrong," said Golden. "Through sports, they haven't accepted not giving my full effort and have pushed me to be a better athlete, be coachable and not be bad in the classroom... they've done a lot."

Though her time at Henry County has come to a close, Golden's legacy will live on, not only because of her athletic and academic achievements, but because she left each person she met and every place she visited better than she found it with her kindness and servant heart.

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