

# Valgoi earns CHSL's top honor

## Warren Regina senior excelled in sports, academics, philanthropy

By Jon Malavolti  
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Recently graduated Warren Regina senior Gina Valgoi said she was surprised and excited to learn she had won the Catholic High School League's Walt Bazylewicz Athlete of the Year Award.



But a quick glance at the Detroit resident's accomplishments reveals a more-than-deserving candidate for the honor, which has been bestowed by the CHSL on one female and one male student-athlete every year since 1989.

Valgoi excelled as a distance runner at the school and also earned All-Catholic honors her senior season in ice hockey —impressive, considering she had never skated before entering high school. She was also heavily involved in activities in and outside Regina while maintaining solid grades.

“She’s really a terrific, all-around kid,” Regina track and cross country coach Gregg Golden said.

Valgoi rounded out her running career at Regina as an All-State honoree in track after finishing eighth in the mile competition at the May 30 Division 2 track and field state finals; she placed 11th in the Division 2 cross country finals back in the fall. In between and prior to that, she racked up several firsts and other high

places in league, regional and county competitions — not to mention losing only one league dual-meet race her entire career — her very first one freshman year.

“She, obviously, has a tremendous talent and aptitude for track and cross country,” Golden said.

Valgoi remained humble despite her athletic dominance, according to her coach.

“She handled her success with such grace and dignity. I thought it was pretty impressive for someone of her age,” he said.

Proof of that is in Valgoi’s remarks about winning the award itself.

“It was an honor to get the award, not only for me, but for my school and my coaches,” she said.

More rewarding for Valgoi is the work she put into winning the award and the friendships she made along the way.

“It is a sacrifice at times, but it’s more not a sacrifice, because you’re with your friends,” she said. “The people on the team just become your really good friends. It’s something that when you enjoy doing it, you don’t mind all the practice and whatnot.”

Outside of athletics, Valgoi was also involved in activities such as the National Honor Society, teaching catechism at her parish and was the student council president, to name a few.

“I think it was something that being at a Catholic school my whole life, it instilled in me to be an all-around person and give back what you’ve been given,” she said. “I think it’s really important to focus on other things, not just sports, but like academics and volunteering.”

And as far as joining the hockey team despite no previous playing experience, Valgoi said she was simply searching for another challenge.

“It was a really good experience, because it was a lot different than the running for me. Running was something that came more natural,” she said. “It was a good way to challenge myself in a way that running didn’t have.”

It was no surprise to Golden that Valgoi could step out of one athletic arena and into the next without missing a beat.

“I think, a lot of times, runners are mistaken as people that just run in a straight line, but she’s really a terrific athlete,” the coach said. “She’s a very good athlete, quite a competitor. I think she would have been really successful in any sport she had tried.”

Valgoi will continue her athletic career and pursue her academic future at Loyola University in Chicago.

Golden said the track and cross country teams will miss her strong leadership and positive attitude, as well as her athletic abilities. He added that Valgoi was the first junior captain for either team during his tenure.

“We usually reserve that for seniors, but she has such great leadership qualities that we felt very comfortable with that, and she did a great job doing that, as well,” the coach said. “Her performance is one thing, and obviously, we’ll miss that competitively as a team, but she added so much more to the team than that.

“She was our hardest worker,” Golden continued. “And that trickled down to the other kids. They see her working that hard ... and I think it rubbed off on everybody else. She was also extremely competitive — one of the most competitive athletes I’ve seen. She really tried and gave a million percent effort every meet.”

Golden added that Valgoi always had a smile on her face, another attribute that was “nothing but contagious for the rest of the team.”

“It’s just that attitude and enthusiasm — all that wrapped into one, along with her talent and competitiveness. Someone like her doesn’t come around every year. I think she’s a very special individual and athlete.”

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