

Posthumous Award

Laurie Ann Newman, 1953-1995 Physical Education Teacher and Tennis Coach Class of 1971

Athlete and coach Laurie Newman was a winner; she won her own matches; she coached winning teams; she had a winning personality. But, last December Laurie Newman lost. On her way from Hickory, North Carolina, to Needham to spend the holidays with her family and friends, she died in a single-car accident on a snow covered highway in Pennsylvania. She was forty-two years old.

Laurie attended Needham parochial schools and then Needham High, where she served as treasurer of the student council and distinguished herself in sports. Guided by English teacher Martha Remsen, her coach and mentor, Laurie excelled at basketball, field hockey, and tennis. As a senior, she was named Athlete of the Year.

After graduating from Elon College in 1975, Laurie stayed on in North Carolina for graduate studies at Campbell College and at North Carolina State University, where she coached women's tennis, junior varsity basketball, and volleyball. Then, in 1978 she joined the faculty of Hickory High School as a health and physical education teacher. Named Teacher of the Year there in 1990, she coached girls' basketball and both girls' and boys' tennis.

Yes, Laurie's teams were indeed winners. Her girls' tennis teams compiled a record of 185 wins and 13 losses and won 14 consecutive conference championships and many regional championships. And her boys' teams achieved a record of 104 wins versus 24 losses. She coached the boys' team to the state title in 1989 and the girls' team to a state championship in 1993.

A coach of champions, Laurie was a winner in her own right. At Pebble Creek Racquet Club in Hickory, she captured multiple tennis titles in both singles and doubles. Fifteen times she was named coach of the year by three different athletic conferences. In 1994, she earned the Coaches Sportsmanship Award of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association.

"But, she was modest about her honors. Her many friends back home never knew about them," says her old friend and NHS classmate Jane Walley Lockhart, who nominated Laurie posthumously for the Needham High School Distinguished Career Award. "Laurie was the epitome of good sportsmanship. The wonderful thing about her as a coach was that she taught people how to lose as well as how to win."

Popular with students and teachers alike, Laurie had a winning personality and, as Jane puts it, "the capacity to make any activity she engaged in fun." She must have made tennis fun for the underprivileged children to whom she taught the game in her spare time.

A buddy in Hickory observed of her: "A lot of people have only one best friend, but Laurie was a best friend to many people. A lot of people considered her their dearest friend and I was one of them." Dan Massey, principal of Hickory High, says of Laurie: "She literally touched thousands of young lives in such a positive way . . . we will miss her greatly."

Amazingly, Laurie accomplished her tennis coaching successes at Hickory High without the advantage of school tennis courts. She constantly had to negotiate with the YMCA for her team to use the Y's courts. Fittingly, her family would like to have tennis courts built in her name at Hickory High School and have established for that purpose the *Laurie A. Newman Memorial Fund*.

Needham High School is honored to bestow on Laurie Ann Newman a Distinguished Career Award.