

RENAISSANCE WOMAN

VERDINO EXCELS IN LIFE

BY JOSHUA CASPER

New Hyde Park center Annie Verdino plays second fiddle to no one—but she does play the bass clarinet among other endeavors. She's truly a girl of many talents.

Along with her credentials as an All-State basketball player and a National Honor Society clarinetist, Verdino, a 16-foot senior with a 95 GPA, also writes for the school newspaper and literary magazine, plays the piano and has added an art course to her schedule this year. She is secretary of the stamp club and the National Foreign Language Society and serves as treasurer for the varsity club and the school's marching band.

"She has a very healthy lifestyle," remarks Dawn Cerrone, Verdino's Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) coach with the Long Island Lightning. "She hasn't been put in a basketball tunnel. She's exposed to a lot of things and she wants to make a contribution not just on the court but in life."

Aside from basketball, Verdino also

swims, the 4 x 100 for the swim team and was named NHP's most improved lacrosse player in 2001 before giving up lacrosse to play in the AAU. She joined the Lightning to focus on her basketball skills during the off-season, where she worked on honing her jump shot.

Annie was determined to add new things to her game," says Cerrone. "I think she is extremely underrated. Put her on a different team and you would hear a lot more about Annie Verdino."

Verdino and teammates Lisa Karcic and Melissa Flaheerty, all varsity players since the eighth grade, have led New Hyde Park to unprecedented success. Last year the Gladiators became the first Nassau team in 20 years to win the Class B State title.

"We wouldn't be where we are without Annie. She is a major reason why we won the States," explains Karcic. "Just look at the playoffs. They double-teamed me and forgot Annie. She was open and we all got



the ball to her and she did all the work."

Verdino, the team captain, has quietly averaged 16 points and 10 rebounds per game. In the first two rounds of the playoffs, she had back-to-back 25-point, 12-rebound games leading NHP to its second consecutive Nassau County crown.

"Annie is very smart and knows the game of basketball," says NHP head coach Annette McKeough. "She is going to be a good college player."

Verdino plans to continue with basketball in college, though she has not yet chosen from the 13 schools to which she applied.

"Basketball is not my only thing. I have other goals," says Verdino, who is still deciding upon a major. "It's important to focus on the future."