

MASSAPEQUA'S DIMARTINO WINNING AT ALL LEVELS

BY JOSHUA CASPER

Massapequa forward Christina DiMartino's extraordinary abilities and perpetual commitment to the game of soccer have fashioned her into the consummate player, ostensibly destined for competition on the world stage. The 16-year-old junior has entrenched herself among the nation's elite young soccer talents.

"She's exciting to watch," says Massapequa varsity soccer coach Kelly Jacobs, who first coached DiMartino in junior high. "It's just fun to coach a player who can do the things she can do on a soccer field...She's a stud."

If the true measure of one's abilities is their results against the most imposing competition, then DiMartino's talents have immutable merit. She has played against the world's most talented young players, traveling throughout the country and internationally to face elite competition. After excelling in both the U-15 (Under-15) and U-16 Regional ODP (Olympic Development Program), she was selected to the U-16 National Team in 2002 and named an ODP All-American. This year DiMartino continued her ascension, earning spots on both the U-17 as well a U-19 national teams.

"It is very intense," DiMartino says. "It

was a nice experience. Playing against the best made me a better player. I learned a lot."

On the inaugural U-17 team, created to further cultivate burgeoning talent, DiMartino excelled, scoring a goal in the team's 3-0 victory in its international debut against Scotland, prompting a call-up to the U-19 team, where she plays with many older players from Division I clubs. This summer she traveled overseas with the U-19 team to take on Europe's U-19 clubs. DiMartino, an Adidas NSCAA All-American, helped her club triumph over Germany and defeat Holland twice.

"The trip was very difficult," she notes. "You have to learn to adapt to the time change, the food and most of all the style of play. [The European teams] have a different style."

Back stateside, she now looks forward to playing with the Albertson Express, a U-17 Long Island Junior Soccer League club, after a two-year stint with the Massapequa Spirit. She's also flourished at Massapequa High School, earning the Mike Clark Award for Nassau County's most outstanding player. Her 10 goals, four of which were game winners, led the Chiefs to a 13-2 record. "Besides her physical skills, she's a really intense player who plays



with a lot of heart and desire," Jacobs notes. "She brings a lot of energy, and it motivates the team around her to work that much harder."

One of those teammates is her younger sister, Gina, a second-year varsity player for Massapequa. "[Christina] is a great player," remarks Gina, who's a member of the U-16 state team and a standout for the nation's ninth-ranked U-16 Commack Emeralds. "I just want to follow in her footsteps, and do what she's done. It's something to look up to."

DiMartino is striving to reach the pinnacle of women's soccer: to play with the women's national team in the World Cup. Her knack for success and her unparalleled fervor have her headed in the right direction.

"[Christina] is a phenomenal person to be around," Jacobs remarks. "She has a great outlook on the game and in life. She's very modest and humble, about what she's done and where she's been. She just loves the game. It's great to see passion like that from a player that has that much ability." ●