Hopkinton High School Student Receives MIAA Student-Athlete of the Month Award

Bianca Pal, a senior at Hopkinton High School, has been selected as the recipient of the "MIAA Student-Athlete of the Month Award" for December 2021. A member of the Hopkinton Unified Basketball and Track and Field Teams, Bianca's leadership and personality inspire all around her. Jay Golden, Unified Basketball Coach, identified Bianca as "caring, compassionate, and empathetic," and said she is someone who "goes out of her way to make all feel welcome on the team." Unified Basketball, a sport that "unifies" students with and without physical and/or intellectual disabilities is fairly new to Hopkinton High School. The "partners" are students without disabilities and as a "partner" Bianca's "genuine, kind, and sympathetic nature lends herself to being a natural in working with students with disabilities," according to Golden. As the community service project leader, it is evident why Bianca was named Captain during her junior year. These same qualities are seen when Bianca is with the Unified Track and Field athletes. According to Chip Collins, Unified Track and Field Coach, "Bianca is an amazing person who quickly became a role model and leader to the team" upon her joining in her first year at Hopkinton High School.

Passionate about serving others, Bianca was the coordinator and point person for the March 2021 Hopkinton Polar Plunge. Her leadership resulted in the "largest and most successful fundraiser to date," raising over $5,000 for Special Olympics Massachusetts. Using her talent to organize, publicize, and execute, she and her family decorated a section of the football field where the entire Unified Basketball Team dumped buckets of cold water over their heads in unison. Golden stated, "The heart and determination that Bianca showed in helping her team raise so much money for such an amazing cause was truly inspiring." Bianca was recently selected to represent Unified Basketball at the Hopkinton Fall Sports Captain's Council and she has served since 2020 as Hopkinton's Youth Activation Council representative with Special Olympics Massachusetts. Bianca works at the Michael Lisnow Respite Center in Hopkinton, a facility that provides emotional and physical support for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Bianca brings the same drive and desires to achieve displayed in her athletics into her academics. Her History Teacher said, "Bianca is a positive and engaged student who shows up ready to learn, and always with a smile." Her teachers indicated she is "insightful and thoughtful in discussion and is always wonderful in class and is a diligent student." Her Fine Arts Teacher noted, Bianca "has an incredible focus and finds inspiration in her everyday life and artistic mediums." An Honors and Advanced Placement student, Bianca participated in the school science fair in 2021 and she has participated in dance

and piano recitals since her adolescent years. She is a member of the Hopkinton Art National Honor Society.

Athletic Director Rich Cormier simply stated, "Bianca is an amazing student-athlete."

The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) Student-Athlete of the Month Award is presented on a monthly basis to two student-athletes who display excellence in the areas of academics, athletics and community service. Students in grades 9-12 who attend MIAA member schools are eligible to receive the award. Monthly award recipients receive a certificate of recognition, are featured on www.miaa.net and MIAA social platforms, and will be honored at a local ceremony to honor their selection. Each recipient will be eligible for the Harry Agganis Student-Athlete of the Year Scholarship provided on behalf of the Agganis family. Nominations for the MIAA Student-Athlete of the Month award may be submitted by principals, athletic directors, teachers, coaches, guidance counselors or other school administrators. For additional information about the MIAA Student-Athlete of the Month Award program please visit www.miaa.net.

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