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## Sterling's Carbaugh leads with versatility

**By Matt Trowbridge**

ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

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STERLING — Devon Carbaugh doesn't look like a cross country runner.

Nor does she run like a discus thrower.

Or shoot like a center.

But she excels at all three. By one measure, she's perfect at all three. Carbaugh, a senior three-sport captain, has started on varsity since her freshman year on Sterling's cross country, girls basketball and track teams, and the Golden Warriors have won the NCIC title all 11 times in those sports.

Hopefully track goes well this spring, too, Carbaugh said. You look at winning conference as being a pride thing.

Now comes the biggest pride thing of all: state. Carbaugh, Sterling's No. 2 all-time leading scorer with 1,797 points, has led the Golden Warriors back to the state girls basketball tournament for the first time in 24 years. Sterling (28-7) plays No. 3-ranked Oak Park Fenwick (33-2) at 1:45 p.m. Friday at Redbird Arena in Normal.

Carbaugh, a 6-foot senior, is one of the area's most versatile athletes, demonstrated by the fact that she won the NCIC Reagan Division cross country title and qualified for state in track in both the discus and 3,200-meter relay.

Those are odd combinations, coach Bruce Scheidegger said. It doesn't make sense that a girl with her body size would be good at distance running and also have the explosive power to be a discus thrower. The thing that separates her is she has a big heart.

And a good outside shot; Carbaugh has made 20 of 70 3-point tries. And a good inside shot; she's shooting 51 percent overall.

She's been an awesome finisher around the basket her entire career, Scheidegger said.

She's also awesomely consistent. Carbaugh has led the Golden Warriors in scoring in 29 of their 35



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Sterling's Devon Carbaugh (left) defends against Freeport's Barbara Pye during their sectional championship game last week at Rochelle.

games. There is no disguising when she walks down the floor that she is our player, Scheidegger said.

Still, she exploded for 31 points in a 60-57 overtime sectional semifinal win over Rockford Boylan, and dominated with 28 points and 10 rebounds in a 61-47 supersectional victory over Des Plaines Maine West to reach state.

She's been outstanding, Scheidegger said. She is the focal point of what we are trying to do offensively. The other kids play off that. When she gets double- and triple-teamed, they get more opportunities. And her teammates have helped by staying aggressive in the postseason, which has opened her up and made it harder to double-team her.

Carbaugh's versatility also makes her hard to double-team. She is as likely to drift out to the 3-point line as to post up inside. And she can get to the basket herself off the dribble.

She's worked really hard on her ballhandling, Scheidegger said. With her athletic ability, and ability to move, it forces the other team into matchup problems.

Sterling's current greatness may be due to its great past. Carbaugh first played basketball at age 5 and grew up playing on traveling teams, even though neither of her parents played. She figures the Carbaughs caught the basketball bug when Sterling won the first-ever IHSA state girls title.

My parents were around in 1977 when big things happened, Carbaugh said. Maybe that excitement got into our genes. Growing up in a town where basketball has a lot of tradition, it's easy to love to play.

That's how Carbaugh got into cross country and the discus. Her best friends ran cross country and her older sister, Taylor, played basketball and threw the discus and shot put for Sterling. Carbaugh simply followed their lead.

People find it unconventional, but I love doing it all, she said. It keeps it interesting, never doing the same thing.

Carbaugh can't pick a favorite sport. She loves them all. But basketball has always been the one where she's carried the highest profile. That's just as it should be at a school that won an undefeated state title its first year, reached state three more times between 1979 and 1983 and has now won seven consecutive NCIC titles and 20 games eight years in a row.


Carbaugh has been prepping for her place in this tradition since she joined a YMCA boys team, coached by her mom, as a preschooler.

We still joke about it, Carbaugh said. Some of my better friends were on that team. They say they never passed me the ball, that I was a ball hog. But I think they are kidding, making something up. I wasn't too dominant at that age.

Maybe not then. But she has been ever since.

Assistant sports editor Matt Trowbridge can be reached at 815-987-1383 or mtrowbridge@rrstar.com.

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