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Headed to the Hall

Two local sports stars to be honored by VHSL

Kim Graham-Miller was a standout sprinter at Stonewall Jackson High School in the late 1980s who went on to win a gold medal in the 1996 Olympics.

Ali Krieger was a soccer star at Forest Park High School in the early 2000s who went on to win two women's World Cup championships with U.S. teams.

This weekend, Graham-Miller and Krieger will become just the fifth and sixth athletes from Prince William County to be inducted into the Virginia High School League Hall of Fame.

In a special report in this week's Sports section, InsideNoVa sports editor David Fawcett profiles both of these incredible athletes from the perspective of coaches who were instrumental in their success.

Fawcett is uniquely qualified to chronicle this milestone. He began covering sports in Prince William over 30 years ago – during Graham-Miller's senior year in high school. And he remembers Krieger as a little girl running around on the soccer field at Hylton High School, where her dad coached.

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Soccer star Ali Krieger (top photo) signed autographs and posed for pictures during an appearance at her alma mater, Forest Park High School, in 2015. She and Stonewall Jackson High School graduate Kim Graham-Miller (bottom photo), who won six state titles running track, will be inducted into the VHSL Hall of Fame this weekend.

INSIDENOVA FILE PHOTOS

Wheeler, Lateef are top fundraisers

Democrats generate most campaign cash

» BY JARED FORETEK
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Two Prince William County incumbents, Board of County Supervisors Chair Ann Wheeler and School Board Chair Babur Lateef, led all local Virginia candidates in fundraising for the first quarter of 2023, with Wheeler bringing in \$131,908, according to the Virginia Public Access Project.

Lateef was second, raising \$79,812 in the quarter, while Fairfax County School Board Member Karl Frisch was third with \$79,754 raised. All three are Democrats.

For Prince William's candidates, the hauls will be a boon in what will surely be two hotly contested races. Wheeler has three challengers vying for her seat: Brentsville Supervisor Jeanine Lawson and Kenn Knarr are set to face off in a Republican primary.

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HEAD OF THE CLASS



Ali Krieger competed on three World Cup teams, including back-to-back champions. FILE PHOTO

Forest Park grad Ali Krieger always embraced a challenge

» BY DAVID FAWCETT
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David Cresswell admits his favorite memory of coaching Ali Krieger at Forest Park High School is unusual. It's not something you'd see on a highlight reel, like a game-winning goal or a head-turning display of footwork while dribbling the soccer ball.

But for Cresswell, the moment still defines Krieger then and now. It speaks to her work ethic and determination to always push herself no matter the circumstance or setting.

One day during Krieger's senior season in 2003, the Bruins' girls varsity soccer team scrimmaged the boys team, coached by Krieger's father, Ken.

After the scrimmage, the teams joined together for sets of 40-yard sprints. Believing he was in good enough shape to keep up with the players, Cresswell ran with them. He soon realized, though, that one player in particular was going to challenge him. And that was Krieger.

She ended up finishing in the top five

of all the boys and girls. Cresswell, meanwhile, did not.

"I'd love to say that I was dogging it," Cresswell said. "But I was trying my hardest."

Krieger is the first to deflect credit to others when it comes to her work ethic, starting with her parents, Ken and Debbie, two former Prince William County Public School teachers who taught her the importance of hard work. Ken, a successful head boys soccer coach at three county high schools, "molded me into the player I am," Krieger said.

"I've always been loved and supported in the home with my family and extended family," Krieger said.

IMPACT IN MULTIPLE SPORTS

Motivated to be the best, Krieger made an impact no matter the location. She attended Hylton her freshman year, where she started as a center midfielder for the varsity soccer team.

When Forest Park opened in 2000,

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Kim Graham-Miller won a gold medal at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta. PHOTO COURTESY UNITY REED

Kim Graham-Miller's sweet personality masked a fierce competitor

» BY DAVID FAWCETT
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Tommy Lovelace loved to needle Kim Graham-Miller.

So when a preview of an outdoor track meet in the spring of 1989 at Alexandria City High School failed to mention Graham-Miller as a contender in the 200 meters, Lovelace seized the opportunity.

Lovelace, Graham-Miller's sprint coach at Stonewall Jackson High School (now Unity Reed), poked at Graham-Miller by telling her the preview mentioned only the champions from Maryland and Washington D.C.

"I guess you will finish third," Lovelace said to Graham-Miller.

Graham-Miller sharply replied, "We'll see about that," then proceeded to win the 200 in a meet-record time.

Feeling vindicated afterward, she walked past Lovelace and offered a rejoinder: "Third place, huh?"

More than 30 years later, the story still makes Lovelace smile. Graham-Mill-

er was quiet by nature with a sweet personality, a kid who cherished the Slurpees that Lovelace bought her while she trained for junior nationals. But underneath her calm demeanor lay a fierce competitor. Challenge her, and she responded in kind.

"She is a very tough athlete," Lovelace said.

BECOMING A TOP SPINTER

Graham-Miller, who will be inducted into the Virginia High School League Hall of Fame Sunday, moved to Prince William County after her mother, Loretta, was transferred to the area for her job with IBM. An eighth-grader at Stonewall Middle School (now Unity Braxton), Graham-Miller was already well-versed in running because her father, Herman, had started her in track as a member of the club he founded in Durham, N.C.

By her junior year of high school,

GRAHAM » PAGE 20

ALSO IN THE HALL

Kim Graham-Miller and Ali Krieger will become the fifth and sixth athletes from the Prince William County area to be inducted into the VHSL Hall of Fame. Here are the previous four:

PAULA GIRVEN

Sport: Track
High school: Gar-Field (1976 graduate)
Year inducted into Hall of Fame: 1998

BENITA FITZGERALD MOSLEY

Sport: Track
High school: Gar-Field (1979)
Year inducted into Hall of Fame: 2000

SHEENA TOSTA

Sport: Track
High school: Gar-Field (2000)
Year inducted into Hall of Fame: 2018

REBECCA WAKEFIELD-SNIDER

Sport: Soccer/Basketball
High school: Woodbridge (1988)
Year inducted into Hall of Fame: 2019

Did you know?

Five of Prince William's six VHSL Hall of Fame inductees (Girven, Fitzgerald Mosley, Tosta, Krieger and Graham-Miller) represented the United States at some point in the Summer Olympics

Krieger opted to move a few miles down Spriggs Road. Her father Ken was going to teach and coach there, plus many of her friends were planning to attend Forest Park.

Leaving Hylton meant she'd no longer attend the same school as her brother, Kyle, who is 13 months older. Kyle was a main source of Krieger's competitiveness. The two challenged each other in numerous activities with Krieger wanting to beat him any chance she got.

"I felt bad leaving [Kyle]," Krieger said. "But I was ready for something new and to have a change."

Krieger arrived at Forest Park with no intention of playing basketball, a sport she thrived in at Saunders Middle School as point guard. She planned on being a cheerleader instead. Krieger made the team but had a change of heart and joined the volleyball team.

She had started playing the sport for Hylton's junior varsity team a year earlier and decided she wanted to stick with it, motivated in large part by the opportunity to play for Dan Jones, another highly successful coach coming to Forest Park.

Krieger did well in volleyball. She earned first-team, all-Cardinal District honors her senior year as a setter and helped lead the Bruins to the Group AAA state final in 2002.

"I felt like I was quick enough defensively to move around the court," Krieger

said. "It was really fun."

Soccer, though, was always her main athletic outlet.

Cresswell knew about Krieger's game-changing abilities after he stepped down as Falls Church High School's head coach to take over at Forest Park.

Needing someone to direct the offense, Cresswell kept Krieger in the central midfield. She responded by becoming a three-time all-district, all-region and all-state selection. Her senior season, Krieger was named the Gatorade State Player of the Year as Forest Park reached its first state tournament.

Krieger was the type of athlete who led by example. She was the hardest worker in practices and always had a kind word to lift a teammate's spirits. Most of all, Krieger focused her efforts on her team first.

"I do not think Ali cared about individual pursuits as much as she wanted team results," Cresswell wrote in his letter of recommendation for her induction Sunday into the 2023 Virginia High School League Hall of Fame class. "I probably admired her more in the defeats as she gathered the team for an uplifting message."

ON TO THE WORLD CUP

Speaking at Forest Park's season-ending banquet, Cresswell vividly remembers predicting Krieger would reach soccer's

ALI KRIEGER IN HIGH SCHOOL

FOREST PARK HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER

- » Two-time captain (2002, 2003)
- » Three-time all-Cardinal District first-team, all-Northwest Region and all-Group AAA selection
- » 2003 All-Met Player of the Year
- » 2002 All-Met first-team selection
- » 2003 Gatorade State Player of the Year senior year

FOREST PARK HIGH SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL

- » First-team all-Cardinal District senior year



highest level. He was right.

After an all-American career at Penn State, Krieger played on three World Cup teams, including back-to-back championship squads. She was also a member of the 2016 U.S. Olympic Team.

On March 23, Krieger announced she will retire from soccer after her Gotham FC National Women's Soccer League season ends. Krieger, who turns 39 in July, said she has been thinking about retirement since last season, after Gotham FC struggled to a last-place finish.

"Mentally, I was wondering, 'What am I doing this for?'" Krieger said. "It was not fun."

She has a growing family she wants to spend more time with. Krieger and her wife, Ashlyn Harris, have adopted two

children, daughter Sloane Phillips and son Ocean Maeve. Plus, Krieger's body was starting to wear down after years of rigorous competition.

In the end, Krieger decided to give it one more year.

"I did not want to end it all on a bad year," Krieger said. "I didn't want that to be my memory. It was a good time to announce it and let the fans and family who have supported me enjoy it with me."

With Gotham FC off that day, Krieger will attend the VHSL induction ceremony April 23 in Charlottesville. It's a moment she can't wait to share with her family and friends.

"It means absolutely everything," Krieger said of her induction. "I felt like my childhood set me up to become the woman and footballer I am."

Graham-Miller had turned into one of the state's top sprinters, winning the Group AAA 200-meter dash, the first of her six state titles. She only improved her senior year under the guidance of Lovelace, a former all-American sprinter at SMU.

She closed her high school career with a flourish by winning and setting then-state records in the 100 and 200 meters. Graham-Miller was also a member of the state-champion 400-meter relay team.

Lovelace came aboard after Stonewall principal Mike Campbell asked him to consider helping Graham-Miller. Lovelace had run track for Campbell at Gar-Field High School, where he graduated in 1981.

"He told me they had a girl up there who was really good, but needed some fine-tuning," Lovelace said.

Graham-Miller liked to dream big. She remembers seeing Osbourn Park graduate and track standout Marcia Fletcher mentioned in the newspaper all the time and craved that as well.

She remembers watching Ben Johnson and Carl Lewis duel in the final of the 100 meters at the 1988 Summer Olympics. All of it and more fueled her ambition to compete some day on track's highest level.

After graduating from high school in 1989, Graham-Miller became a standout performer at Clemson. She was a program-record 15-time Atlantic Coast Conference champion and a three-time ACC meet MVP (the only woman to have ever achieved this feat). Graham-Miller was honored as one of the ACC's 50 greatest female athletes and is a member of Clemson's Athletic Hall of Fame.

Qualifying for her first Olympic Trials in 1992 only drove her more to push herself. Four years later, Graham-Miller made the U.S. Olympic Team and won a gold medal as a member of the 1,600-meter relay.


Nothing stymied her. Not even the 400, an event she dreaded.

The 100 or 200? Competing in those events elicited nerves, but nothing like the 400. She isn't sure why

**KIM GRAHAM-MILLER
IN HIGH SCHOOL**

STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL (now Unity Reed)

- » 1988 Group AAA outdoor state champion in the 200-meter dash
- » Member of the 1988 Group AAA 400-meter outdoor relay state champion
- » 1989 Group AAA indoor state champion in the 55-meter dash
- » 1989 Group AAA outdoor state champion in the 100- and 200-meter dashes and was a member of the 400-meter relay state champion.
- » Member of the 1989 U.S. Junior National Team in the 100 meters, 200 meters and 400-meter relay
- » Finished second in the 200 meters and third in the 100 meters at the USA/TAC Junior Championships
- » A member of Unity Reed's athletic hall of fame and has a street named after her at Unity Reed.



she stressed so much over the 400, which, at her father's insistence, she began running at age 6 for his club team.

Fear of failure perhaps. The demand of going full speed for one lap certainly wore on her. Whatever the reason, the self-imposed pressure escalated her anxiety.

Then she'd effortlessly run to another victory and realize how much she overreacted.

"I was worried for nothing," Graham-Miller said.

RUNNER TO COACH

When her running career ended, Graham-Miller pursued coaching, inspired in part by her rapport with her long-time coach, Randy Bungard.

Last July, Graham-Miller became a head coach for the

first time when UC San Diego hired her to run its track and field program. Bungard, who first coached Graham-Miller at Clemson, is a member of her staff at UC San Diego.

Now as the person in charge instead of being an assistant, Graham-Miller is busier than usual.

Fortunately for her, the Tritons have no meets scheduled for the weekend of the VHSL's Hall of Fame ceremonies.

The open date will allow her to return to Virginia for a brief stay when she attends the induction event April 23 in Charlottesville. But she won't have time to come through Manassas, where her Olympic-gold medal winning track career began to take root.

She has fond memories of her last stop here in July 2019 while on vacation. With her mother and her two daughters, Graham-Miller drove by her old house and showed her girls the street, Kim Graham Lane, named in her honor next to Unity Reed. It was her daughters' first trip to Virginia.

"Visiting Manassas was meaningful because it is my old stomping ground," Graham-Miller said. "It's where it all started, my track career and being who I am today. And to have my daughters see my street in person was really cool."

The trip was even more significant after her mother passed away in October, 2019. Graham-Miller will no doubt be thinking of Loretta at the induction ceremony.

"She was my No. 1 fan," Graham-Miller said.

Although Graham-Miller will miss having her mom at the induction ceremony, she's looking forward to having her other family members there. It's a family full of talented athletes themselves.

Her father starred in track and football at Virginia State University and qualified for the 1964 U.S. Track and Field Olympic Trials. Her younger brother, Jay, played five seasons in the NFL. And her older sister, Kathy, is Norfolk State's head volleyball coach.

"It means everything," Graham-Miller said of her family sharing her special day. "My family has been so supportive of everything I have done."