SPORTS

Caiola praised on and off the track

By Avery Martin
Contributor

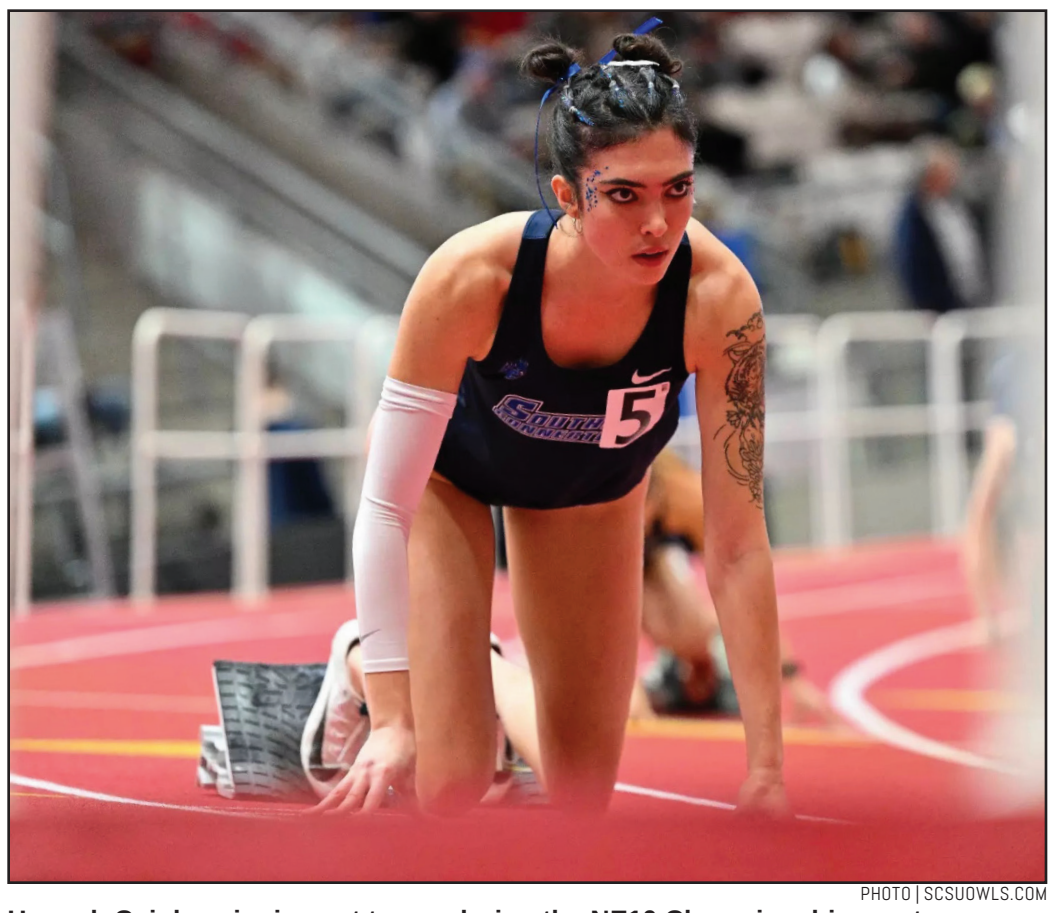


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Hannah Caiola, a junior, set to run during the NE10 Championship meet.

It has been a busy year for Hannah Caiola, a junior, who was recently named the U.S. Track & Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association's East Region Track Athlete of the Year.

The junior from Glastonbury, Connecticut has set multiple on-track records and has won races in a dominant fashion. But off the track, she is using her platform to speak out on mental health and the effects of burnout on athletes.

"I think it's important to be a big advocate for people who do struggle with it because I feel like people don't speak up about it enough. I think the world needs to hear how hard it is to be where we are as athletes that are at this level, because it's not just easy going," Caiola said.

Caiola released a video on Instagram in January in which she spoke of her long journey with anxiety and burnout and how she manages it while performing at the top of Division II track and field.

After a freshman season that included top finishes and best results, Caiola says the pressure to be at her best constantly was overwhelming.

"I think I started to suffer from perfectionism just because of where I ended my freshman year I expected to be basically up at the top and it wasn't that way. It honestly took a toll on my mental health," Caiola said in her video.

Caiola's teammate Maddie Hathorn, a junior who herself is the 2024 NE10 Outdoor Pole Vault Champion, applauds her for speaking out. Doing so sheds light on the often overlooked and taboo topic of mental health.

"I know a lot of us have struggled with our mental health. I've struggled with it, I've had my ups and downs, a lot of anxiety. So, I think a lot of us related to it and we're proud that she was able to speak up about it," Hathorn said.

Head coach Melissa Stoll Funaro praised Caiola's leadership both on and off the track. She believes Caiola has encouraged other team members to feel comfortable speaking out on topics that may seem hard to cope with.

"I'm happy that Hannah is getting more involved with the student athlete advisory committee and coming into her own as a young adult and a young woman," Stoll Funaro said. "These issues are very prevalent, so to feel comfortable in oneself and to be able to share that and know that there is a community of others who share the same thing."

Stoll Funaro also believes the honor of Track Athlete of the Year is well deserved for the current Division II record holder.

Caiola, a business major, set an NCAA DII record in the 300 meters early in the season with a time of 38.17. She then set the third all-time performance in the 500-meter with a 1:12.00 and earned a personal best time of 53.40 in the 400 meter not long after. At the recent 2025 NE10 Indoor Championships, she ran the 200-meter and 400-meter and won both events.

At the national indoor championships, she finished 11th in the 400. While that result was not what she had in mind, Stoll Funaro said the way Caiola handled the mental aspects of the race showed great emotional maturity.

"What I found to be apparent, especially in this last indoor national championship, she managed her emotions very well. From the day leading up to the race, at race time and even post-race when it wasn't the outcome that she wanted," Stoll Funaro said. "Though she was very disappointed, she met things head on. She didn't retract."

With the outdoor track season now underway, Caiola is still speaking out and using her platform to encourage awareness of anxiety, stress and burnout for collegiate athletes. For her, running is not only what she does best but where she finds peace.

Stoll Funaro also believes the sport to be beneficial not only to developing Caiola as a leader, but in bringing her joy.

"She's very inquisitive and wanting to know how to be better in everything. How to approach the race better," Stoll Funaro said. "She finds joy in running, and when you delight in those joyful things, you are confident in that. I'm just really happy for those who find that."

With one season left after this semester, Caiola wants to make it count. She aims to keep promoting a platform for mental health awareness while also coping with her own struggles as she continues to break records.

"I think the most important thing through burnout is even if you don't want to do something, just do it because that's where most people quit, I find, is when they reach that point," Caiola said. "So just making sure you show up no matter what, even if you are having a bad day."

LAX wins gritty third straight game

By Matt Cain
Contributor



PHOTO | LILY RAND

Midfielder Amelia Mansfield, a senior, takes control of the ball.

The Women's Lacrosse team picked up a pivotal win in NE10 conference play, defeating Southern New Hampshire University, 15-11, in a high-energy matchup. With the victory, the Owls improved to 7-3 on the season and evened their conference record at 2-2, keeping pace in a competitive league race.

Even with the cold and windy conditions, the action started fast and furious, with the Owls coming out of the gates firing on all cylinders. Standout attacker Allie Palmer and attack/midfielder Macy Vail, both juniors, ignited the offense early, scoring the first two goals of the game and assisting each other in a seamless display of chemistry.

Their early contributions helped jump out to an early 4-1 lead by the end of the first quarter. Although the Penmen managed to sneak in a goal before the period concluded, the momentum was clearly with the Owls.

"We scouted them with a couple of new offensive game plans we've been working on," Palmer said after the game. "We just wanted to stay focused and execute what we practiced."

The second quarter continued the fast-paced scoring trend. Southern New Hampshire struck first in the frame, narrowing the gap, but the Owls quickly answered. Attack Jordan Fisher, a senior, found the back of the net shortly after, reestablishing the lead and keeping the Owls in control of the tempo.

"The defense was what we normally do. Just keep the pressure and high intensity," midfielder Bailey McDermott, a junior, said. "Working as a unit and communicating."

From there, both teams traded goals in an intense back-and-forth battle, but the Owls maintained their composure and capitalized on key possessions down the stretch. Solid teamwork, smart ball movement and clutch finishes sealed the deal for the university in one of their most important games of the season thus far.

Southern New Hampshire added their fifth goal of the game, but the Owls quickly responded. McDermott notched her third goal of the day, continuing her strong performance and also giving her a hat trick. Just a minute later, attack/midfielder Maddox Burton, a sophomore, delivered a highlight-reel moment, firing a behind-the-back shot into the net for her first goal of the game, pushing the Owls' lead to 10-5. The Penmen managed to close the quarter with two more goals, narrowing the gap, but the Owls still held a 10-7 lead heading into the final frame.

The Penmen managed to rally a comeback in the last seven minutes of the game, mostly due to draw control. The Owls have been one of the better teams in the at winning the draw as midfielder Amelia Mansfield, a senior, leads them in draws.

For more on this story visit thesouthernews.com



Attack/midfielder Anna Meserve, a sophomore, attempts to score.

Column: 2025 MLB Season



By Dillon Flanigan
Sports Editor

On March 26, all baseball fans were experiencing a similar feeling as kids feel on Christmas Eve as the new season brings hope and optimism to fans.

Besides a minor signing here and there, the market was largely at a halt waiting for the 26-year-old phenom Juan Soto and his notorious agent Scott Boras to decide what team he wanted to sign with.

Rumors swirled after turning down extension offers from his previous teams in the Washington Nationals, San Diego Padres and the New York Yankees what he would value while in free agency. Would it be what coast he prefers to play on, total money, length of contract or even if he liked the direction of the team's future.

The Dominican Republic native was going to get paid because of his bat. Though as a Gold Glove finalist in 2024, he is considered to be below average in his fielding ability.

As a 19-year-old in the nation's capital, Boras eyed him, advising him to wait until free agency to sign and not to entertain an extension. That was a savvy move by Boras, waiting to capitalize on the market ahead and not waiting for below-market money.

In the offseason, five different teams were involved in the Soto sweepstakes. Those teams included the Los Angeles Dodgers, New York Mets, Yankees and small market teams in the Toronto Blue Jays and Boston Red Sox where the top five teams heavily invested in landing Soto.

Ultimately the star chose 15 years for 765 million with the Mets over 16 years and 760 million with the Yankees. It is unclear why the Queens over the Bronx, other than the total price tag especially how the Yankees have a rich history of winning, including going to the World Series a year ago with Soto.

The reason for the speculation is because of the additional luxury incentives in the contract including a suite for his family at Citi Field.

Frustrating at times for fans, wanting to secure the talented outfielder in the prime of his career without recognizing the free-market venture Major League Baseball has.

With the Mets owner Steve Cohen having the ability to print money, other small market owners are at a point of contention how they could contend with smaller arms than Cohen and Dodgers owner Mark Walter who in the previous offseason signed two-way player Shohei Ohtani to a 10-year contract worth $700 million.

After a lockout in the 2021-22 offseason, the owners and Major League Baseball Players Association, MLBPA, remain at odds.

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