



Seniors Sydney Kassel (Left) and Olivia Cieciva (Right) pose for a photo in front of the school store with their Tufts and Sacred Heart University merch respectively. Photo by Jaime Dasilva ('26)

Westhill Swim & Dive, Soccer Send Two Seniors to College

Jaime Dasilva
Reporter

Olivia Cieciva ('25) and Sydney Kassel ('25) talked with *The Westword* about their journey's to the next level

Westhill seniors are showing how committed they are, not only to their academics but also to their sports. As graduation nears, many seniors are nervous about what college has in store for them.

Nonetheless, a handful of seniors have already gotten into their dream colleges with devotion to their sports. Two of these successful seniors are Olivia Cieciva and Sydney Kassel.

Olivia Cieciva, a member of Westhill's Swim and Dive Varsity team, got into her dream college, Sacred Heart University. Cieciva said the process of getting recruited started back when she was a junior.

"My recruiting process with Sacred Heart started when I received an invitation for their Junior Day visit. During my visit, I received a tour of the campus and really enjoyed it [...] and after that I kept in touch with the coaches. In the meantime, I looked at other schools, but no other school left an impact like Sacred Heart did. Coach John [Spadafina] even came to watch me swim at the ISCA Summer Senior Blast in Florida," Cieciva said.

Starting with just an invitation for a Junior Day Visit, Cieciva hasn't been able to find a better fit for her other than Sacred Heart. Keeping contact with the coaches helped solidify Cieciva's love for Sacred Heart.

Cieciva discovered her love for swimming back when she was a child in the first grade after breaking her arm. Swimming helped her regain mobility in her arm. Ever

since then, she has fallen in love with the sport, calling herself "a fish out of water."

"Ever since starting the sport, swimming has become part of my lifestyle. From the people I'd meet and places I'd visit to the daily routine, swimming was intertwined with my life. You can even say I felt like a fish out of water without it." Cieciva ('25) said.

The challenge of regaining mobility drove Cieciva to continue swimming more, until it became a pivotal part of her daily routine and lifestyle, influencing her travels and people she's met.

Receiving her offer on an unofficial visit in the summer of her junior year, she had a tour of the campus and its athletic facilities, where she accepted the offer and became verbally committed.

"The whole process made me feel validated and that all of my efforts over the years were fruitful and that there's more to come!" Cieciva said.

Sydney Kassel, a player on Westhill's Varsity Soccer team, kicks off her senior year smoothly. Gaining a sports scholarship at Tufts University, her skills, dedication, and hard work on the field paying off, opening remarkable opportunities for her future.

Starting to play soccer at just three years old, Kassel immediately was infatuated with the sport. Her love for the sport has endlessly grown throughout the years and well into high school.

During the summer of her sophomore

year, Kassel kept in contact with Tufts by going to their camps and meeting with the team and coaches. Receiving her offer in the spring

"Ever since starting the sport, swimming has become a part of my lifestyle. [...] You can even say I felt like a fish out of water without it."

of her junior year, then fully committed the summer of her junior year.

"Overall the recruiting process was hard but rewarding. I'm so excited to become a part of the Tufts women's soccer team and also attend the university itself. In the end, I chose a school that would first fit my academic needs and also gives me a chance to play on a highly competitive collegiate team," Kassel said.

Kassel's journey to Tufts shows her devotion and determination for both academics and athletics.

Showing a healthy academic and athletic balance, she starts this new journey of her life confident and enthusiastic, embracing opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Establishing herself as a standout player on Westhill's varsity team, she has earned recognition for her talent and dedication on the field.

"I have always had a drive and passion for soccer, so it wasn't a hard decision to continue the sport through high school and eventually college. I have been playing club soccer for nine years now and ever since I was little the end result was always college soccer. So it was, again, an easy decision to continue playing the sport that I love," Kassel

('25) said, emphasizing her long-term passion and commitment to soccer. Starting at a young age, she's always had the distinct goal of playing soccer at a collegiate level.

Her dedication to soccer is even more evident through her fourteen years of both club and high school soccer.

She bases her success in high school and her decision to continue playing in college due to her love of the sport.

"The whole process made me feel validated and that all of my efforts over the years were fruitful and that there's more to come!"

"I have always had a drive and passion for soccer, so it wasn't a hard decision to continue the sport..."



(Left) Sydney Kassel ('25) charges ahead in an away game against Trumbull. Courtesy of Sydney Kassel ('25)



(Right) Olivia Cieciva ('25) poses with John Spadafina, Head Coach of Sacred Heart University Swim & Dive, at the ISCA Summer Senior Blast in Florida. Courtesy of Olivia Cieciva