

LONG GROVE LIVING

THE EXCLUSIVE SOCIAL MAGAZINE FOR RESIDENTS OF LONG GROVE

SEPTEMBER 2020

ELLA O'NEALL

Student, Athlete, Activist

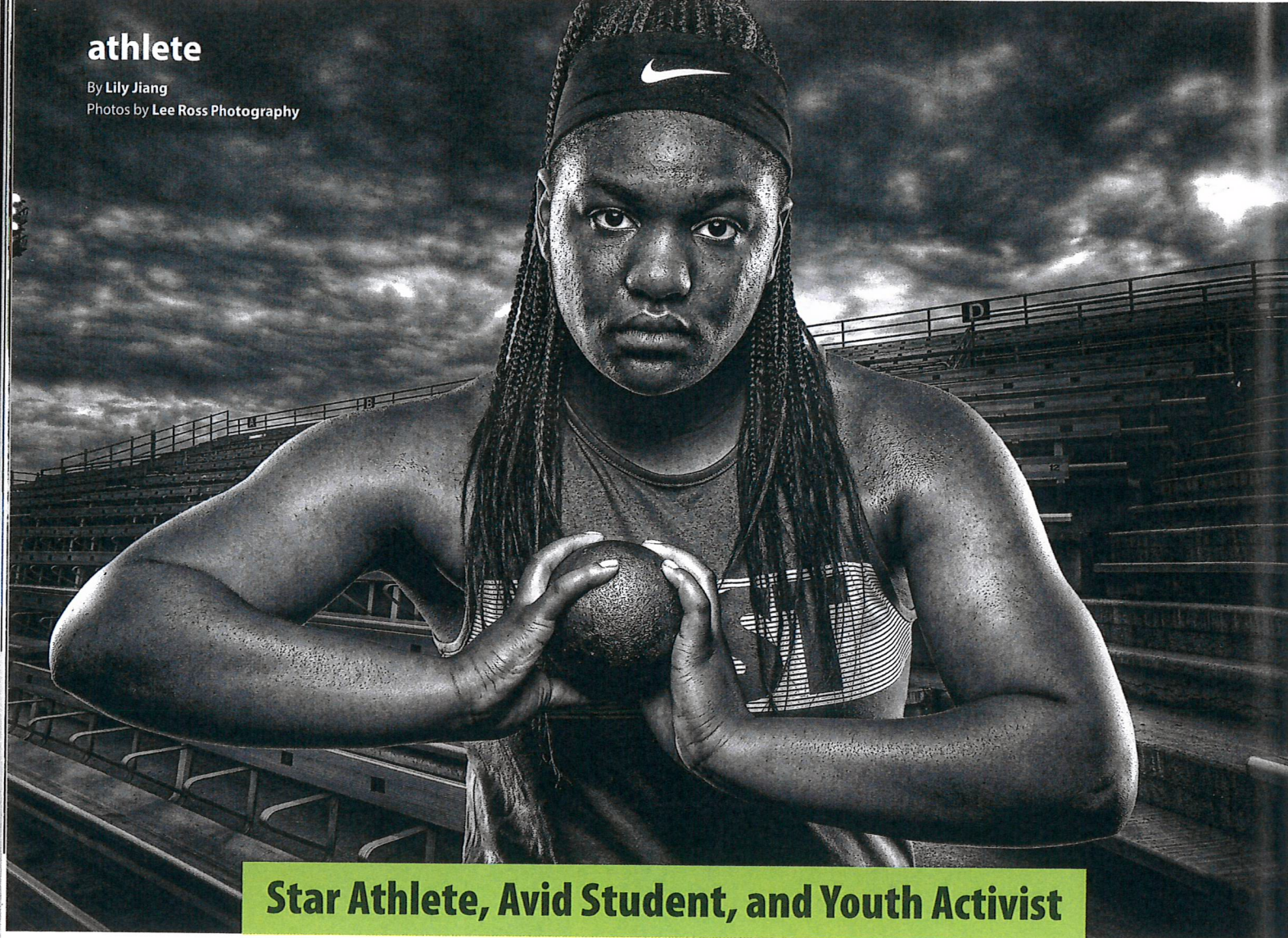
Photo by Lee Ross

Outdoors 18
Family Feature 20
Student Athlete 24
History 28
Kids, Downtown, & More...

athlete

By Lily Jiang

Photos by Lee Ross Photography



Star Athlete, Avid Student, and Youth Activist

Ella O'Neill

I first met Ella O'Neill during summer break, the introduction coming through my friends, and her sisters, Audrey and Isabelle Smart. As I attended Woodlawn Middle School and now Adlai E. Stevenson High School, I spotted her throughout the bustling hallways against the shiny blue lockers during brief passing periods between classes. Still barely knowing each other, I found her again on social media speaking on the Black Lives Matter movement that has since defined an inspiring and nonetheless historical crux of reminisces I'll be telling my grandchildren far past my adolescence.

Ella's narrative, at turns harrowing and triumphant, starts with becoming a trailblazing star athlete on Stevenson's Girls' Varsity Track and Field team. Only a sophomore, Ella has already accomplished a lot for the 2018-19 season while throwing the shot put. In her short high school career, she is Lake County's 5th

place medalist, North Suburban conference's 4th place medalist, and IHSA Sectionals 3rd place medalist in the shot put. Unfortunately, this year, Ella did not have the opportunity to make an expected record-breaking throw without a spring season.

Nevertheless, she has unwaveringly championed through this hiatus with an extensive training regimen and the endorsement from a team of supportive coaches. Specifically, her throwing coach Frank Radostits, whom she has worked with for about a year and a half, has only positive attributes to describe her.

"She is very coordinated, explosive, and extremely strong. She is probably one of the strongest, if not the strongest athlete, I've had the pleasure of coaching. She comes in with all the strength, the balance she needs — ready to roll — and so we're just teaching technique."



From early Saturday morning sessions with Coach Radostits to weightlift training during the school year, Ella's daily indoor practices consist of three grueling hours of mentally and physically demanding integrity. Besides CrossFit and advanced strength classes, Ella weight lifts in the morning from 6-7 am and continues to condition after school for about two more hours.

In the face of the brutal COVID-19 pandemic, Ella has employed this summer before her junior year with an indefatigable motivation to improve.

"Right now, I'm in preparation for the Junior Olympics, which is exciting for me. I've been out doing training every day since the quarantine," Ella said. "There's an open track near my house, and I go out for a couple of hours with my dad."

With an affably large family, Ella has six sisters, three of whom go to Stevenson, and one brother. Her older sisters, Audrey and Isabelle Smart, (16), are adopted twins who join the ranks of rising seniors in the upcoming 2020-21 virtual school year. Madison O'Neill, (15), along with Ella, are rising juniors, and also adopted twins.

"My family is blended and very supportive. It's a complicated mix, but I wouldn't change a single thing — I love them all so much," Ella said.

Although she has been an athlete for practically half of her life, participating in a myriad of sports ranging from softball to bas-

ketball, Ella has balanced that with an integral involvement in the Black Association of Stevenson Students (BASS).

"BASS taught me how to hold a conversation and respect different opinions. That's helped me listen and communicate in order to make a change," Ella said. "It's one of the only ways I feel we can make a change — by listening to everyone with different opinions."

Although not a veteran activist, the Black Lives Matter Movement, which reached across the world, forming global solitary, and her natural outspoken personality gave Ella a bubbling need to do something in her local community.

Like legions of Black women before her, this young teen activist is building a better tomorrow. Ella had never attended a Buffalo Grove protest, let alone spoken at one. And yet a few days into the midst of June, with her friends and family by her side, she became a leader in the face of her community, with some 10,000 strong Long Grove and greater District 125 supporters.

Joined by a diverse slew of young and old allies alike, she proudly stood center stage with a sizable megaphone while reciting a spoken word poem she penned, titled *Freedom Seekers*. With her protest speech, in which she implored her audience to take action, she became an inspiring activist determined to make a change.

...



Ryan Messner Ins Agency Inc
Ryan Messner, Agent
437 Robert Parker Coffin Road
Long Grove, IL 60047
Bus: 847-793-0041

**We're returning
\$2 billion to our
auto policyholders.**

State Farm® announces the Good Neighbor Relief Program. Our auto customers will receive, on average, a 25% credit for their premium between March 20 and May 31. No policyholder action is needed. That's \$2 billion in customer savings. Because now more than ever — being a good neighbor means everything.

**Like a good neighbor,
State Farm is there.®**

State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company
State Farm Indemnity Company
Bloomington, IL

State Farm County Mutual Insurance Company of Texas
Richardson, TX

2001270

