

# GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## Gateway soccer player kicks her way into history

**Huntington-** In a game against Mohawk held Tuesday October 3, senior striker Jessica VanHeynigen made Gateway history by becoming only the second Gateway soccer player to ever hit 100 points—goals and assists—over the course of their high school career. When the historic goal went in, play stopped and she was presented with the game ball, as teammates, coaches, family members and reporters swarmed her to share in the celebration.

Jessica VanHeynigen has been on Gateway's varsity girls' soccer team since eighth grade, and is a co-captain in her final season this year. She has been dedicated to her sport for many years, but never contemplated the idea of racking up 100 points. "It never actually occurred to me that I could reach 100 points until the end of last year. I wasn't too focused on it—I've just been playing my game and whatever happens happens."

VanHeynigen went into the game versus Mohawk with 97 points, and the first half concluded without her picking up a point. The rest of the game was a different story. VanHeynigen scored three goals in the second half, the last with about six minutes left of play. She expressed that her first feeling was not one of excitement or joy, but something different. There was a level of stress attached to this feat. "Honestly, my first thought was relief. It was like there had been this underlying pressure to just reach 100 points already like everyone was expecting. And when I scored the 100th point I finally took a deep breath and was like, you did it!"

Although Jessica was only the second individual player to accomplish this goal (the first was Jessica Rida in 2002), she has always been aware of the support around her and how her teammates have helped her through her high school career. "Every team that I've played with since 8th grade has been completely different. Each one has helped me learn, grow, and shape me as a player. This isn't a one man team, so I want every teammate that I've ever had to know that they helped contribute to this success." VanHeynigen was sure to express the importance of teamwork and is thankful for the endless encouragement from her teammates.

Gateway's Athletic Director Matthew Bonenfant spoke of the impact of VanHeynigen in Gateway sports. "Jessica is a hard working person, and has earned this achievement through her dedication. She is a mentor to her younger teammates and a role model to all girls in the soccer program. Gateway is lucky to have someone of her character as a representative not only of our school and athletic department, but the district as a whole."

Steve Estelle, Girls Soccer Coach, is incredibly proud of VanHeynigen and all that she has done during her time on the team. "Jessica's commitment to improve every year, her tremendous desire to score for her teammates and school, and her passion for the game of soccer are some of the reasons for this great achievement. Jessica would be the first to tell you that her points were achieved through the excellent play of

her teammates. Thank you Jessica, for being part of the Gateway community. It is a privilege to be your coach.”

After she graduates from Gateway, leaving a legacy in her path, Jessica VanHeynigen plans to play soccer at the collegiate level. She is committed to Southern Connecticut University, where she will play Division II collegiate soccer. While in school Jessica will study Exercise Science, focusing on Human Performance.

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*Photos (top to bottom): #12 VanHeynigen in action during Tuesday’s game at Mohawk; mother Jenn VanHeynigen was one of the first to reach her daughter after play stopped; Athletic Director Matt Bonenfant and Varsity Coach Steve Estelle celebrate with their historic player.*

