

sports & recreation

Nutley native Cervasio makes mark as big-time sportscaster

By Jim Hague
Observer Sports Writer

For as long as she can remember, Tina Cervasio, a rising star in sports television broadcasting, has always been involved with sports.

"I remember being a little girl and going to the University of Delaware football games to see my uncle, Alan Cervasio, play," said Cervasio, a native of Nutley. "My father (Joseph, a native of Belleville) played football for Cornell. I remember going up to Cornell for games as well. I was always surrounded by sports."

Some of Cervasio's noted relatives include former Belleville High School softball coach Carl Corino and current Caldwell College athletic director and men's basketball coach Mark Corino. Former Nutley superintendent of schools Joe Zarra is Tina's uncle.

"It's all in the family," she laughs.

"I would always go to games and I was always surrounded with sports," Cervasio said. "I just loved it and developed a passion for it. I didn't have any professional heroes growing up. My heroes were the local ones, the members of my family."

When Cervasio went to Nutley High School, graduating in 1992, she was the captain of the cheerleading squad and competed in

track and field, even trying the shot put.

"It was tough to do with the nails," Cervasio said. "I think I tried every sport and ended up cheering for all sports. I found out that I was good at gymnastics and dancing. I think I was good at anything that didn't have a ball. I didn't do well with the ball. That's why I went for track."

Cervasio went from Nutley High School to the University of Maryland, where she studied broadcast communications and journalism.

"I was pretty young, like junior high school, when I went to the Rose Bowl with my family," Cervasio said. "I remember it was UCLA and Iowa and I was so into it. It

really left an impact on me. I remember that day, telling my father that I wanted to find a job in sports. And he said that there were different aspects to it, the business side, broadcasting and writing. I found it all so fascinating."

When Cervasio was still attending Nutley High School, she realized that a lot of women were breaking into the sports journalism field, especially in television and radio.

"I remember seeing more women on television," Cervasio said. "I loved hearing Suzyn Waldman on WFAN. She was a big influence on me. Linda Cohn on SportsCenter and Lesley Visser. It

see CERVASIO page 16



Nutley native Tina Cervasio has worked her way up the ranks to become a regular sportscaster and reporter on the MSG Network and sports anchor on FOX5 New York.

SPORTSVIEW BY JIM HAGUE

3,000-hit man Jeter once roamed NA field

Ed Abromaitis sat in Yankee Stadium Saturday afternoon to witness a piece of baseball history. A while ago, the former Queen of Peace athletic director and long-time Kearny resident procured tickets to see his beloved New York Yankees play the Tampa Bay Rays.

How could have Abromaitis predict that it would be the same day that someone he knew since he was

a little boy would carve his place in baseball immortality?

"I never could have dreamed it," Abromaitis said. "I never could have thought it would have happened now."

Abromaitis was one of the thousands of Yankee fans who were in attendance Saturday to watch the Yankee captain, Derek

see VIEW page 18

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CERVASIO from 15

wasn't just a man's world anymore. Women were getting their chance."

Cervasio capitalized on that window of opportunity and mapped her future. She started in college by creating her own sports channel, called "Terrapin Timeout," featuring highlights and scores, much like SportsCenter.

"It was the beginning of a long road for me, but it was a start," Cervasio said. "I did everything, the writing, the editing, the producing. It was a

good experience."

It led to a host of odd jobs in broadcasting and journalism. She did the public address announcing for track and field meets. She became the sports editor of the Nutley Sun newspaper. She did some other behind-the-scene production work.

Cervasio said she got her first big break when she worked for Newsport TV in Long Island, the cable network that televised games on SportsChannel.

"I was commuting back and forth to Long Island, log-

ging games," Cervasio said. "I learned a lot about the business that way, going from editor to writer, then asking our camera guys to put me in front of a camera and make a tape of me reporting. It gave me a little more credibility and got my name out there."

Cervasio then got a few radio gigs, including one covering the New York Red Dogs in the Arena Football League, and a few on television, including a regular stint on Comcast's CN8 network.

"That was my first real TV job," Cervasio said. "It was called the Varsity Sports Zone and I worked with Kevin Burkhardt (who does the off-the-field rover reporting for the Mets on SNY)."

In 2006, Cervasio got her first big break, doing the rover reporting for NESN in Boston, covering the Red Sox on a daily basis.

"It was something that I had to do," said Cervasio, who remained with NESN for two years. "I wanted to work with one team and it was a wonderful town and team. I couldn't

ask for a better gig. It was a tough schedule and the work was crazy, but I loved it."

After two years, Cervasio wanted to return home – and she got the break she needed. The MSG Network was looking for a sports anchor.

"I came to MSG, a network that I had been watching since I was a kid," said Cervasio, who now does sideline reporting for New York Knicks games and does the pre-game, halftime and post-game reports for New York Red Bulls games. "I can't ask for a better position right now. I love the flow of covering basketball and the players give you great stuff for features and interviews. They're able to respect me and tell me stories that help to build better relationships."

Added Cervasio, "With the Red Bulls, I'm doing so many different things. I love what I'm doing with them."

The responsibilities with MSG have also allowed Cervasio to do some sports anchor work part-time on both Fox 5 New York and My9New York.


Cervasio was asked if she's amazed how quickly her star has risen in the New York met-

ropolitan sports scene.

"I guess because I started so young that it seems like it's taken so long," Cervasio said. "I wanted to be doing this where I am at 25. But I have to be happy. I still want so much more for myself. I want to report more, do a lot more. I think I'm a work in progress."

But for now, Tina Cervasio, the Nutley girl, is making a mark for herself in the rough-and-tumble world of New York sports.

"A lot of people have inspired me over the years," Cervasio said. "I still do a lot of events close to home. My family still lives in Nutley. I did a Women in Sports seminar there. I like that people recognize me from Nutley. By me being out there and being from Nutley, maybe I can be a positive role model. I love what I do and I would love to have someone aspire to do what I do. I want to be a positive role model."

Considering she went from a Nutley school girl to television sensation, it's safe to say that Tina Cervasio is definitely a role model for countless other local girls already. 

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