

Now recovered from knee injury, Louisville recruit Gianna Rotelli ready to finish Pine-Richland career strong

By: [Jerin Steele](#)

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Submitted by Gianna Rotelli

Pine-Richland's Gianna Rotelli is a Louisville track and field recruit.



Gianna Rotelli was excited going into her junior season, because she was the top ranked javelin thrower in the WPIAL after a second-place finish as a sophomore, but she never got the opportunity to showcase her talent.

She suffered a serious knee injury while playing volleyball, which sidelined her the entire track season and beyond.



“I basically blew everything out in my knee. ACL, LCL, PCL, meniscus... everything was gone,” Rotelli said. “As soon as we got the MRI we knew I was going to be out for a year. So, I missed my junior season of track and my senior season of volleyball. I went to (physical therapy) for nine months. As soon as I was able to do agility drills, it was more about getting the confidence back in my knee.”

After a long recovery, Rotelli, a Louisville track and field recruit, is back for her senior season at [Pine-Richland](#) and enjoying every moment she can, while building back her belief that she can compete with the best in WPIAL Class 3A.

“I know the knee is fine and it’s going to hold up,” Rotelli said. “That’s what I keep telling myself, but with javelin you’re jumping into your last two steps and then planting all your weight on your one knee, which happens to be my left knee that I hurt. We’re slowly working on getting that confidence back.”

A sign of the progress Rotelli has made came April 15 at the Tri-State Coaches Association meet at [West Mifflin](#). Rotelli placed second, throwing 120-1 feet. She still feels she has more in her, but it was a step in a positive direction.

“Tri-State was the first time I threw on a runway since my sophomore year at states,” Rotelli said. “That was a little scary at first. It took a while to figure it out and trust the knee, and I still don’t trust it fully, but we’re getting there and hopefully by WPIALs we’ll be good to go. I hit 120 (feet) two meets in a row, so I think that means I’m finding my stride. Hopefully we can get that number up a little higher.”

Rotelli credited Rams throwing coach Andy Borgen with helping her gain trust in her knee. Borgen had a similar experience with a knee injury when he was in high school, so she’s leaned on him for guidance through her own recovery process.

“Coach Borgen tore his ACL in high school playing football and he came back and threw his sophomore year, so we have that in common,” Rotelli said. “He’s been helping me with the confidence aspect of it. He tells me that I just have to trust it. We’ve made a lot of progress the last few weeks just trusting the knee and planting on it. He’s been there to support me emotionally more than anything else.”

Rotelli has several dual meets and invitationals to prepare for WPIALs, which are May 17 at Slippery Rock. Along with losing last year to injury, she also lost her freshman season that was canceled because of covid, so this is only her second season competing at the varsity level.

She's seen the talent around her improve, which is something she embraces.

"The competition this year is a lot better than it was my sophomore year," Rotelli said. "You have girls that have been throwing for three years now that are in my grade, and they have a year of experience on me. They've had time to hone their skill set and their technique, and they're really starting to hit their stride.

"It excites me, because there's more competition out there, which is good. I just need to have that one throw where it just clicks. I haven't yet, but I'm throwing more consistently. We're in the process of fixing the little things in my approach that are going to get me that extra 10 to 15 feet."

Jerin Steele is a freelance writer

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