

# Memory of athlete lives on through upcoming 5K race

by Sue Botos

When Dara Hosta won the overall competition at the 1999 Olmsted Falls "Friday Night Live" PTA talent show with her English/Italian rendition of "Time to Say Goodbye," no one imagined it would be an eerie premonition of things to come.

The 14-year-old, a standout in sports as well as in music, collapsed on May 26, 2000, after winning the 400 meter run in her physical education class at Olmsted Falls High School. She passed away on June 1 of that year, baffling doctors as to what exactly happened to her.

On May 3, Dara will be remembered at the ninth annual Dara Hosta Olmsted Spirit 5K Race/Walk starting at 9 a.m. at Olmsted Falls High School. Funds raised from the event go toward college scholarships for Olmsted Falls High School seniors who have shown school and community spirit through their activities.

According to North Ridgeville resident Mark Madere, founding sponsor of the event and father of Dara's good friend Jacqui, the Hostas asked him to name the then two-year-old event in honor of Dara.

"Her parents approached me with tears in their eyes at (the) Fourth of July (town event) and asked me if there was any way we could rename the race in Dara's memory," Madere said. "Of course, it took me no time to answer."

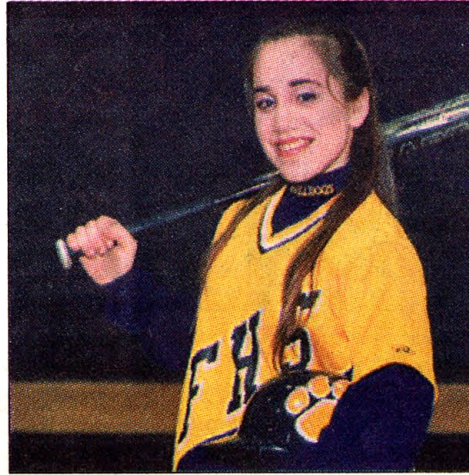
Madere explained that the two bus drivers who started the race in 1998 were looking for a major sponsor to contribute \$1,500.

"I told them I couldn't do the \$1,500, but could do \$500 and would sign on to raise money," he said.

Dara's dad, Bruce, said when she wasn't participating in her many activities, she would read or listen to opera music.

"It was scary amazing everything that she could do," he recalled, pride filling his voice. "She didn't want a TV or phone in her room."

Hosta said his daughter's goal was to someday become an opera singer because



Dara Hosta loved sports and opera music.

Sarah Brightman was her favorite performer. He told the story of a neighbor who once complimented the Hostas' for playing such beautiful recorded music, to which Hosta replied "that's not a record, that's my daughter."

Dara, a middle child with two brothers, had natural talent, according to her dad, who said that she'd had no formal training, other than membership in several school music groups and in the choir at St. Mary of the Falls Catholic Church. Dara sometimes attended Mass twice on Sunday to sing.

"She was unbelievably nice and kind," Hosta added. "That Sunday (before she died), she came home from church, gave me a big hug and said 'I love you.'"

Madere remembered the young girl's zest for life.

"Of all the kids that came over (to our home), Dara was the most lively," he said. "She had a really sweet personality."

Both men agreed, however, that when it came to the playing field, Dara was a fierce competitor. In middle school, Hosta said his daughter felt girls' softball was too slow, so she tried out for—and earned—a spot on the boys' travel Hot Stove hardball team.

"She was the only girl in the whole league," he said, adding that she was the starting second baseman and lead the team

in stolen bases.

As a freshman at Olmsted Falls High School, she earned spots on the girls' varsity fast-pitch softball team and varsity girls' golf team. In 1999, Dara placed second in the western region in the Indians/Fox Sports Net baseball skills competition. Although competitive, Dara's kindness also came through in sports. Her dad recalled a track competition where a girl edged out his daughter near the finish line.

"(Dara) told me she heard the girl (coming up behind her) and thought that she (Dara) already won two medals—and this girl had none," he said.

Although it was never determined what exactly happened to Dara, Hosta said it was speculated her heart had gone into arrhythmia and caused her to collapse. He was told his daughter had complained to her teacher and her friends of not feeling well after a race.

"One of her friends found her face down in the grass, not breathing," he said. "The

bottom line is, it was her time to go."

After Dara's death, parents of students at Olmsted Falls High rallied to get a defibrillator for the school, a device that probably could have saved Dara. About 700-800 runners and walkers have registered for this year's race, which raises funds for college scholarships. Both Madere and Hosta expressed concern that the tight economy has affected corporate sponsorship, and that race participants would be looked to for more funds.

"The really cool thing last year at the senior awards (at the high school) was that the race was the biggest contributor," Madere said. "We blew away the next closest (contributor) with \$25,000 in scholarships, up from \$20,000 the year before."

Hosta explained in conclusion what the race means to him and his family.

"The race is the energy that we were going to give in love to our daughter," he said. "It shows other kids that life is worth living."

For race information or to make a tax-deductible contribution, visit:  
[www.spectralight.com/5krun](http://www.spectralight.com/5krun)