

INDUCTEE PROFILE

In her own lane

Dedication, ability made Nardozza Schmitt an IUP legend

By John Hartsock

Altoona Mirror

Tawney Nardozza Schmitt had plenty of natural talent as a top-echelon collegiate swimmer at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

But it was her tireless work ethic that predicated the 1990 Hollidaysburg Area High School graduate's impressive success in the pool.

Nardozza Schmitt, a 19-time All-American who was named to the IUP Athletic Hall of Fame in 2007, is a member of the 2022 Blair County Sports Hall of Fame class.

The recognition is a much-deserved reward for the effort that she has invested.

"I think that having success in anything is being dedicated to it and putting work into it," Nardozza Schmitt said. "Practice makes you better at anything, and putting that work into swimming made me better.

"Every time that I would succeed, I wanted more, and I put a lot of pride into what I did," Nardozza Schmitt added.

Frances Nee, who was Nardozza Schmitt's swimming coach at IUP from 1990 to 1994, also said hard work was Nardozza



Tawney was a 19-time All-American in IUP swimming history.

Schmitt's greatest ally.

"She was highly competitive, and she had a lot of God-given talent, but she showed up for every practice and worked very hard," Nee said. "Once she got in the pool and started training, she did very well."

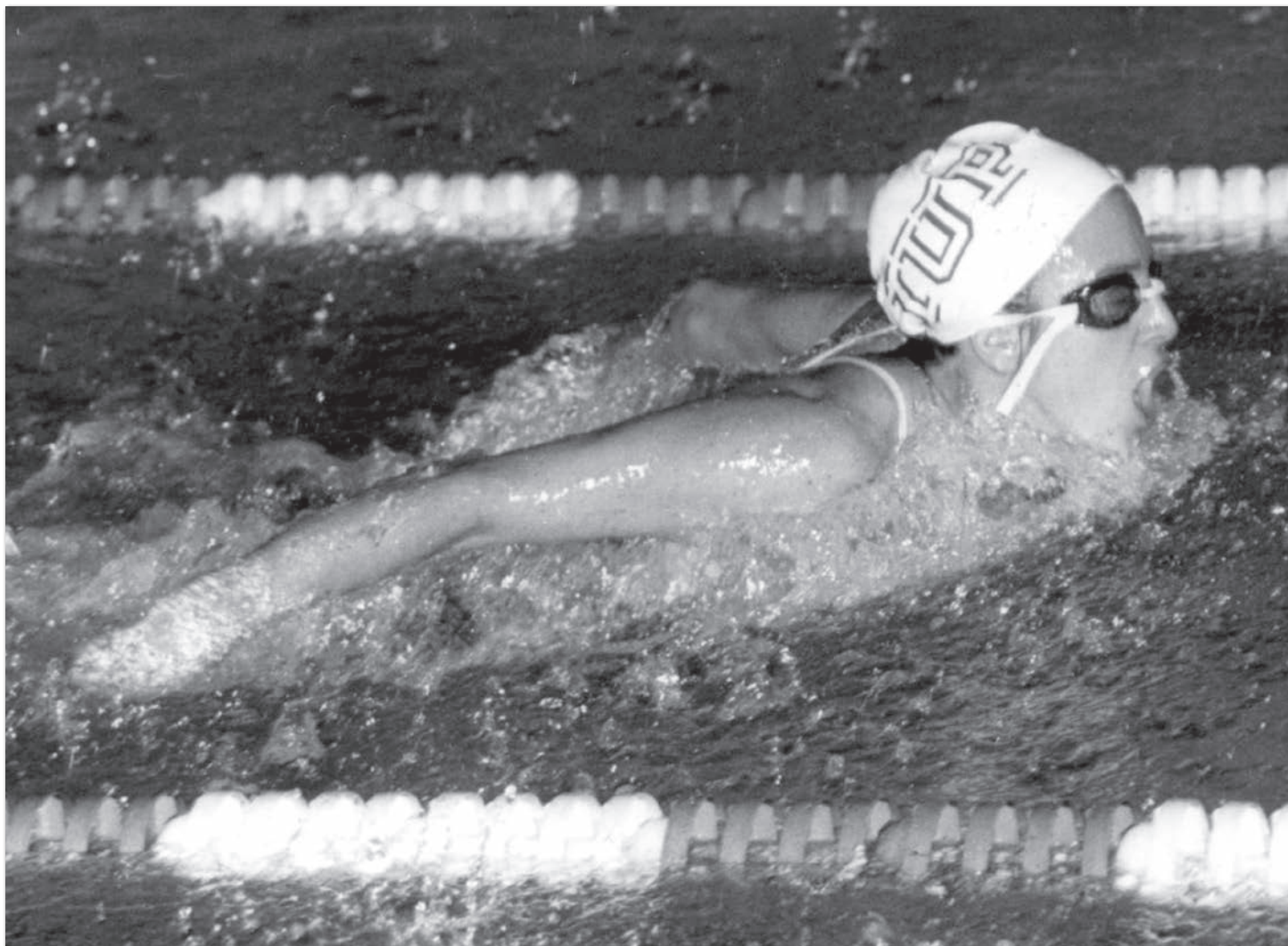
Loren Hershberger, who coached Nardozza Schmitt at the Hollidaysburg YMCA during her formative years all the way through her high school and college days, also said that she was coachable and diligent.

"She definitely had some natural talent, but in swimming, natural talent only takes you so far," Hershberger said. "She worked at it, and she was a very coachable young lady who took direction well. She always wanted to get into the water and work, even when she returned here from college. She worked hard at not making mistakes, and making her strokes as efficient as possible."

Nardozza Schmitt was also an intense competitor.

"She absolutely loved to race, and she loved to compete," Nee said. "She was a natural sprinter. You can't make somebody into the kind of sprinter that she was."

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Tawney was the first IUP women’s swimmer to earn All-America status in each of her four seasons.

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At Hollidaysburg Area High School, Nardozza Schmitt was a five-time District 6 champion from her freshman through senior seasons, winning the 100 breaststroke three times and 100 butterfly twice.

A very versatile swimmer on the collegiate level at IUP, Nardozza Schmitt set school records in 10 separate events and won six Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) event championships, including individual titles in the 50 and 100 freestyle events. In her senior year, she was named the IUP Woman of the Year as the most decorated IUP athlete in any sport, and she was also named the IUP Female Athlete of the Year.

Also in her senior season, Nardozza Schmitt placed second individually in the 100 freestyle event and was a

part of two second-place freestyle relay teams in the 200 and 400 meter events at the NCAA Division II national meet in Canton, Ohio.

“The nationals were in Canton, and I was very comfortable there, because we had swam there in the past at nationals,” Nardozza Schmitt said. “The second places were the highest rank that I received and that my relay team received at nationals in all my years at IUP. That was a pretty special achievement for all of us. Our women’s team in my final years at IUP became

very competitive.”

Tiffany Staver, who was a teammate of Nardozza Schmitt’s on the 200 freestyle relay and 400 freestyle relay teams at IUP and also earned induction into the IUP Athletic Hall of Fame, said that Nardozza Schmitt always brought a positive attitude to the pool.



Nardozza bio

Sport: Swimming
High school: Hollidaysburg Area
College: IUP
Hall of Fame achievement: 19-time All-American at IUP and inductee into its Hall of Fame in 2007.
Current residence: Irwin, PA

"As a teammate, she was pretty awesome," Staver, who lives in Chambersburg, said. "She was always positive, uplifting, and she always had a smile on her face. She helped create a great atmosphere for the rest of the team. She worked hard for what she achieved, but she had natural talent, and she was fast. She had to be fast to compete in the sprint freestyle events."

Nardozza Schmitt credits her mother, Judy, for her steady, positive influence, as well as that of her coaches and teammates, as big factors in her success.

"My mom never pushed or demanded," Nardozza Schmitt said. "She let me figure it out on my own, and she was my biggest cheerleader. That made my swimming experience a positive one."

Her father, Danny, was a restaurant proprietor (Danny's Steak Hut, Nardo's) for many years before passing away in 2020.

Tawney and her three older sisters — Nanette, Kristie and Jendy — got acclimated to the pool by taking lessons from professionals early in life. All four of them became outstanding swimmers, and Nanette (Cummings) currently coaches both the Altoona Area High School boys and girls swimming teams.

"Mom wanted us to know how to swim because she was afraid of the water," Nardozza Schmitt said. "She knew that she couldn't save us in the water, so we needed to know how to swim. We all started young."

Nardozza Schmitt, an Academic All-American who graduated with bachelor's and Master's degrees in education from IUP, has been a fourth-grade teacher in the Penn Hills School District for 22 years. She resides in the Pittsburgh suburb of Irwin with her three teenage children, Michael, Siera and Nicholas.

Nardozza Schmitt feels fortunate in many ways.

"I have been blessed with three children and they keep me busy," Nardozza Schmitt said. "I am a teacher at Penn Hills High School, and



Tawney stands with her coach and mentor, Frances Nee, at the IUP Hall of Fame induction in 2007.



Tawney (second from left) poses with IUP teammates Lisa Templin, Deidre Lamb and Katie Woodruff at the NCAA Division II national meet in 1994.

I enjoy working with a very diverse group of students every year. I am very honored to be chosen to be part of a special group of athletes who will always be remembered for their sport

and for being part of Blair County. It's a privilege to be recognized by your hometown. I am so proud to represent swimming in the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame."