



MAURA JOHNSON
NVHS BOOSTER CLUB FEATURED ATHLETE OF THE WEEK
SPECIAL ATHLETE

The NVHS Athletic Booster Club is proud to present the featured athlete of this week, special athlete MAURA JOHNSON. Coach McGhee says that Maura brings such a great energy whenever she is around our team! She always brings a positive side out of the girls, coaches, and relaxes the team whenever they get stressed. The coach also says that knowing how much being a part of Neuqua Valley cheerleading means to Maura and her family makes coaching even more worthwhile.

Booster Club Reporter: *Maura, I heard that special athletes are talented multi-sports athletes. What sports do you play?*

Maura: I am a Neuqua Valley cheerleader, and I cheer with the wildcat team at Cheer Alliance. I play hockey for the Chicago Blackhawks Special hockey team. I also am an athlete with the special Olympics Neuqua team for unified soccer, basketball, swimming, and track throughout the school year. I also play for the WDSRA softball team in the spring.

Booster Club Reporter: *What made you decide to get involved in competitive sports?*

Maura: I love to compete in all my sports and activities. Sports are very important to me and help me push myself to get better each time I compete. I love being a part of a team. I do like getting a trophy for all my hard work.

Booster Club Reporter: *What do you find most fun, and do you find harder, in competing in the Special Olympics?*

Maura: The best part of being a part of Special Olympics is that I am on a team with all my friends. We all work really hard to try our best. The hardest part of participating in Special Olympics is when I lose in an event. It makes me feel very sad, but I know I can try and win again next time.

Booster Club Reporter: *Can you tell me a bit more about your strategy to deal with difficult moments such as these?*

Maura: My strategy for dealing with difficult situations is talking things thru and trying to figure out why something bad or wrong happened. Once I get a better understanding of the situation, I can move forward on improving myself.

Booster Club Reporter: *Can you give me an example?*

Maura: An example of this is when I needed to have my heart fixed. I needed open heart surgery in August and I was really scared. I let my family and doctors know that I was scared, so we came up with a plan. I met the nurses and doctors that would do my surgery. I visited the hospital that I would have the surgery in and I talked a lot with my mom and my heart doctor. We drew pictures of my heart and the "piece" of it that was

"broken", so that it could get fixed and I could be stronger than ever. It worked! I only stayed for 4 days in the hospital after my open heart surgery.

Booster Club Reporter: *That is really smart! I'm glad everything went well. Do you think playing sports had anything to do with coming up with this great strategy?*

Maura: Yes. It makes me feel very good to make my family and friends proud of me for my effort. Sports have actually brought a lot into my life. I love being a part of a team, meeting new people and traveling to new places. It's awesome that my family can cheer me on while I compete.

Booster Club Reporter: *Who is your role model?*

Maura: My role model is my mom. She takes care of me and takes me everywhere. She started to play hockey because I wanted to. We do a lot of things together and I count on her. She never lets me down. She signs me up for all kinds of activities and sports that I want to do and loves hanging out with me. She is fun!

Booster Club Reporter: *Maura, tell me three things people normally don't know about you.*

Maura: I enjoy riding horses, I don't like broccoli, I love to travel!!

Booster Club Reporter: *What would you like people to know about special needs athletes?*

Maura: Special needs athletes love to compete in their sports. They love to win, work hard and be a part of a team. You should not see my diagnosis and judge me. Let me show you what I am able to do and you'll be surprised at how much I can learn too. I will give you my best effort to try and win.