



# NJSIAA TRAILBLAZER

This weekend, elite track and field athletes from New Jersey, the nation and even the world will converge on Franklin Field in Philadelphia for the Penn Relays.

The event, which was first held in 1895, is the oldest and largest track event in the United States. Just about every great performer from New Jersey in all of that time has competed there, most of them while in high school. Few of those have accomplished more than Erin Donohue, who graduated from Haddonfield in 2001.

The Penn Relays have a long history of showcasing female athletes. The first event for women was a 100-yard dash in 1962, and the high school girls 440-yard relays were added in 1964. But once Title IX was passed in 1972, female participation - particularly among high school athletes, including those from New Jersey - grew exponentially.

Donohue is one of the greatest beneficiaries of that growth, with her interest in track sparked by trips there as a young girl. She was inducted into the Penn Relays Wall of Fame in 2020, and for good reason. Donohue is one of only four women to win Penn championships at the high school, college and professional levels. She has a total of eight wins (which each come with a gold watch): the high school mile, five distance relays while running for the University of North Carolina, and the invitational mile twice.

She's also one of New Jersey's greatest female athletes of all time. While competing for Haddonfield, she won nine Meet of Champions titles (two in cross-country, one indoors and six outdoors). She could have won more indoor championships, but she played basketball through her junior year, where she scored over 1,000 points while leading Haddonfield to a state championship.

In high school track and field, she won three national championships in the mile, including one with a then-state record time of 4:42.96. She also won 15 state outdoor Group championships out of a possible 16. She won the 800, 1,600 and 3,200 four straight years at the outdoor state Group championships, and also won the javelin three times.

At North Carolina, she earned All-America recognition seven times. After graduating in 2005, she began working for Nike and competing as a professional. She made the United States World Outdoor Championship team in the 1,500 in 2007, and earned a spot on the 2008 Olympic team in the same event. She also made the World Indoor Championship team in the 1,500 in 2010.

She still resides locally, and remains connected to her hometown. That includes holding events like a track clinic last fall at Haddonfield, called RunJumpThrow, for kids ages 5 through 12.

The Star-Ledger named Donohue the state's top female high school athlete of the 2000's decade. She was also inducted into the NJSIAA Hall of Fame in 2018.

