

Inside Sports: St. Mary's lacrosse legacy spans generations



Annapolis may be a sailing town, but lacrosse is a legacy at St. Mary's High School, where one-third of students play the sport. (Tom McCarthy Jr. | CR Staff)

By Maria Wiering

mwiering@CatholicReview.org

ANNAPOLIS – Female athletes at St. Mary's High School had a say in which spring sport the Saints would add in 1980. It was no surprise when lacrosse won that vote over softball.

Annapolis may be the nation's sailing capital, but on shore, its denizens are likely to play lacrosse. Almost one-third of St. Mary's students play lacrosse for the school. Some cradled a stick before they were out of diapers, and are family legacies.

Both parents of senior Jake Ellis played for St. Mary's, as did his maternal grandfather.

"This is such a large family atmosphere at St. Mary's," said Jimmy Ellis, Jake's father, who graduated in 1980 and is president of the school's athletic association. "It's like no other place I've ever been."

Beth Terhorst Bannan, Class of 1985, returned to coach the frosh-soph girls team at St. Mary's, where the program includes her two daughters.

In this video, St. Mary's players and coaches talk about the character of players, the faith aspect of playing for a parish school and the legacy of lacrosse.

"If you are in any way associated with this parish, you at least pick up a stick," she said.

St. Mary's High opened in 1946. C. Mason "Daffy" Russell earned a Purple Heart in World War II, returned to his hometown and shortly thereafter started the program. Russell dedicated much of his life to the school, and when the National Lacrosse Hall of Famer died in 2001, visitation was in the St. Mary's gym that bears his name.

Carmine Blades, an alumnus and longtime teacher who served as St. Mary's athletic director from 1980 to 1998, said that Russell knew the game and got along well with youths.

Blades remembers great players in the 1950s, such as John Howard and Jim Keating, and then Ed Mullen, who went on to help the University of Maryland to its last

NCAA championship, in 1975.

In 1980, Jim Moorhead took over the program. An All-American defenseman at Johns Hopkins University, Moorhead sent Brian Wood, one of the best attackman ever, from St. Mary's to his collegiate alma mater. Wood is now the coach of Severn School, the Saints' rival.

In 1993 and '96, the Saints ruled the Maryland Interscholastic Athletic Association A Conference, one of the nation's top prep leagues.

"I was a pretty passionate player myself, so that's kind of how I coached," Moorhead said. "I demanded a lot of myself, and I demanded a lot of my players."

Moorhead, who rose to become assistant principal and school president, is now principal of St. Martin's Lutheran School of Annapolis, but still a parishioner of St. Mary's, where an athletic scholarship is named in his honor.

Ben Rubeor, who starred at Loyola Blakefield and the University of Virginia, became the boys' head coach in 2012 and understands the game's place at St. Mary's.

"The fact that their parents put so much into it," Rubeor said, "the fact that the kids care so much about it, there's a responsibility to make this thing what it should be."

Athletic director Trey Whitty has a database that shows St. Mary's has sent 182 boys onto Division I lacrosse. Last year, St. Mary's counted 63 of its graduates - 35 women and 28 men - on college rosters, at institutions such as Cornell, North Carolina, Notre Dame and Syracuse.

In 1997, St. Mary's won what was then the Girls' Independent League. While it's been a while since it won a varsity championship, St. Mary's is one of only two schools with both boys' and girls' teams in among the top 11 in The Sun's rankings.

Kate Hickman, the girls' coach, has known St. Mary's as a lacrosse school since her playing days, at Severna Park High and Vanderbilt University.

"That's not ever going to go away, because of the community," Hickman said of the school's lacrosse tradition.

See more Inside Sports stories:

[Inside Sports: Alhambra basketball keeps bringing them back to Allegany County](#)

[Inside Sports: Cristo Rey lacrosse players stick together](#)

[Inside Sports: St. John's Catholic Prep cheerleading team grounded in trust](#)

[Inside Sports: Basketball big man goes from Lithuania to Goretti to Notre Dame](#)

[Inside Sports: Mount St. Joseph hockey goes the distance](#)

[Inside Sports: Former Mercy coach still on basketball scene](#)

[Inside Sports: St. Frances Academy grows its basketball legacy](#)

Inside Sports: DeSales runners thrive in any environment

Inside Sports: No 4-0 for select Calvert Hall seniors

Inside Sports: Loyola's water polo players flow into swim season

Inside Sports: NDP volleyball proves its A Conference caliber

Inside Sports: No bumps for Seton Keough field hockey

Inside Sports: Reif Cup honors Curley coach, Calvert Hall parent

Inside Sports: John Carroll's marching band plays - and practices - hard

Inside Sports: Ellie Gonzalez is national-class runner at Catholic High

Inside Sports: Spalding's broad-based program decades in the making