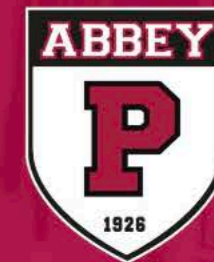


# ENGAGING MORE THAN A GAME

Investing in  
athletics yields  
results beyond  
the Abbey



In an age where engagement in athletics at the high school and college levels often encompasses far more than what happens on the court or playing fields, Portsmouth Abbey School continues to recognize that athletics, outlined in the Vision Statement as “a key dimension of human excellence,” builds character, cultivates leadership skills and promotes physical and mental wellness that benefits students well after graduation. The School’s commitment to enhancing the Raven athletic program as part of its Strategic Plan is evident through recent investments in facilities and professional development opportunities. ➤

*The Healey and Sheehan Fitness Center was upgraded in August 2023.*



The new Moyles Family Scoreboard.



Racks serve as dividers for training spaces and help organize equipment used during workouts.

In terms of physical additions, a new scoreboard and portable scorer's box and tower for filming, courtesy of the Moyles family, have been added to the football field. The scorer's box and tower will be moved to St. Hilda's turf field in the spring for lacrosse. The Carlos X. Arjaujo '96 track is also being resurfaced and a major redesign of the Healey and Sheehan Fitness Center was completed in August.

Athletic Director Christopher Milmoie, now in his second year, has also spearheaded improvements to the Raven conditioning program to prepare athletes for varsity competition and beyond.

"We want to completely transform the strength and conditioning program so that our students can succeed more as athletes," stated Milmoie. "Health and wellness are incredibly important. I want our kids to have a sense of what it really means to train and be active so they can improve as people long-term, but also as competitors right now."

A renewed focus on conditioning was one of Coach Milmoie's first priorities after becoming the athletic director and conducting an internal audit of athletic resources. "I recognized that we did not have a strength and conditioning coach, so I immediately reached out to my network," he said. "I brought in Tony Mure who's been working with high schools for almost 35 years, and he got right to work for us." As a consultant, Mure travels to Portsmouth a few

times every month and has an app for students to follow their conditioning program. He also conducts strength and agility testing for the School and lent his expertise to the recent redesign process of the fitness center.

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— DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS CHRISTOPHER MILMOE

Mure took data from a 2022 school community survey and developed an updated design for the Healey and Sheehan Fitness Center to better meet program needs. Working with the fitness company, Perform Better, the 5,000 square foot space was transformed into a more functional area that includes locations for free weights, team lifting, plyometrics and speed and agility training.

"Having a more effective space for training our student-athletes will help us have a high-performing program so we can assist our students in achieving higher levels of athleticism and physical fitness," said Milmoie. "It will also benefit everyone who uses the fitness center."

Investments have not just come in the way of facilities and equipment but also by supporting staff through professional development opportunities.

The School invited Tim O'Shea, a long-time collegiate basketball coach currently working for the Naval Academy Prep School, to speak with the coaching staff. O'Shea shared his insights on the rapidly changing world of college recruiting, offering suggestions to build better programs to develop young men and women in preparation for playing at the collegiate level.

The Abbey also sent the baseball coaching staff to the World Baseball Coaches Convention in January and volleyball head coach John Huynh attended the Gold Medal Squares coach's clinic in May. Additionally, a revised coaches handbook and

professional workshops for women in athletics will become available for female varsity and JV coaches in the coming months.

When looking toward the future, the focus is often on what needs to

be changed or improved. However, what remains can sometimes have the largest and most long-lasting impact.

One constant for Raven athletes has been the dynamic between player and coach. The term "student-athlete" is a familiar phrase. What is often overlooked is the "teacher-coach" who not only has a vested interest in seeing students succeed but who quite literally lives and breathes the Abbey Mission on campus every day.

"The teacher-coach model is at the heart of everything that's been done here at the Abbey," said Milmoie. "These individuals are invested in seeing the whole person succeed. Often, they are a student's teacher before they are their coach and they provide a wealth of experiences and knowledge. They understand life at the Abbey and are part of a larger support system. It will remain a part of our program indefinitely."



John Huynh serves on the faculty and as head coach for girls' volleyball.

some kids get bogged down and overwhelmed in the first year of college because they had not been held to the same standards that the Abbey expects.”

Holbrook attended Wheaton College earning a degree in philosophy in 2013. He helped Wheaton’s baseball team earn four regular season NEWMAC titles and season championships, four NCAA appearances and a second-place finish in the 2012 College World Series. He also serves as Manager for the Newport Gulls of the New England Collegiate Baseball League during the summer and is a former Gulls player. He was selected as the manager for the East Team in the NECBL’s 2023 All-Star game in July and was named the league’s Manager of the Year after leading the Gulls to the NECBL championship.

Dr. Gus Gleason ’07, also a three-sport athlete for the Ravens and a former decathlete at Division I Fordham University, serves as a lieutenant in the medical corps of the U.S. Navy Reserve and is currently the chief resident of trauma and general surgery at Tufts Medical Center.

“The whole boarding school experience, specifically at the Abbey, requiring sports and having to do three sports, it’s a unique experience,” said Gleason. “The other part is that it builds a framework for approaching a lot of team-based activities, not just in athletics. It builds the discipline that translates to finding success in college and then in work. Obviously, I connected it with the military and then with my job as a surgeon. It permeates throughout everything” he added.

“I learned a lot about how to lose,” commented Claire Davidson ’16 when talking about the value of being a three-sport athlete and how it prepared her for playing at the collegiate level and life beyond the Abbey. Davidson was a standout student competing in cross country, squash and tennis. The squash court is where she really excelled, playing as the “number one” on the Raven team all four years and placing in the New England Preparatory School Athletic Council (NEPSAC) Championship three times. “When you excel at one sport, that can sometimes go to your head. Learning how to lose at other sports allows you to turn those losses into lessons and then to learn how to win humbly at more than just your sport,” Davidson shared. After graduating from Portsmouth Abbey, she had a successful athletic career at Tufts University, where she

received All-NESCAC honors for squash and served as team captain. She graduated with a degree in psychology and now works as a research lead for Mindset Health.

“Playing a college sport is year-round,” said Taylor Lough ’15. “With competitions, training and post-season conditioning, a lot goes into being a college athlete. That isn’t easy without having had three full athletic seasons behind you—so I was prepared. Still, having the right conditioning program and knowing what conditioning truly means was something I had to learn. It isn’t just about working out.” During her four years at Portsmouth Abbey, Lough was captain of the field hockey, basketball and lacrosse teams. She continued her education at Bates College, where she played field hockey and earned a degree in mathematics. She is now a sales representative for HubSpot, a technology company that builds marketing and other management services platforms.

When deciding where to go to college and whether to pursue athletics at the collegiate level, these Raven alumni agreed that students should start by asking simple questions and trusting themselves.

“Ask yourself if you feel like all aspects of your life are going to improve there, whether it’s socially, academically, athletically, spiritually or mentally,” advised Gleason. “Can you really be successful without one of those components being there?”

“Find where you are happiest,” said Villareal Kenahan. “It’s cliché, but it’s like the broken leg test. If you get injured and can’t play anymore, are you still going to be happy with where you’ve chosen to go to school and what you’re studying? Because you’re a student-athlete, not an athlete-student, you need to choose where you can be successful in both. Someday the playing career will end. Be honest with yourself about your expectations as an athlete and where you can thrive as a student too.”

Many of the lessons learned at the Abbey that helped guide these Ravens through their collegiate days have also stuck with them as they carry on those same messages and values to their present work.

“I like to say that surgery is the ultimate team sport,” said Gleason. “I was driven to surgery because of my time at the Abbey with athletics. The surgeon I work



*Gus Gleason '07 discusses the benefits of the Abbey experience, life as a Division I athlete and how skills developed early-on translate into the working world.*

with is my “coach.” The other residents I work with are my “captains”; the other “teammates” are my nurses, scrub techs, et cetera. Athletics teaches you that you can’t do anything alone successfully. You need a support group, and a lot of times that must come from the people you work with or the team you’re on, and that all comes from the Abbey.”

“I’m very competitive, and everyone likes to win, but I learned under my coaches how to go about it the right way. How to win and lose in a mature and humble way,” stated Holbrook. “The importance of treating others with respect whether things are going your way or not, that philosophy rubbed off on me at the Abbey, and it hit home with me again as a coach.”

“Portsmouth Abbey is a School where the multi-sport student-athlete thrives, not only on the field of competition but in other aspects of life as well,” said Head of School Matt Walter. “Our challenge as a community is to ensure

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— GUS GLEASON ’07

we can provide the best possible teacher-coaches, programs and facilities to help our students accomplish all they are capable of. We’ve done a great job with teacher-coaches and programs over the years, but some of our facilities are lacking. Our plans for upgrading the track and the fitness

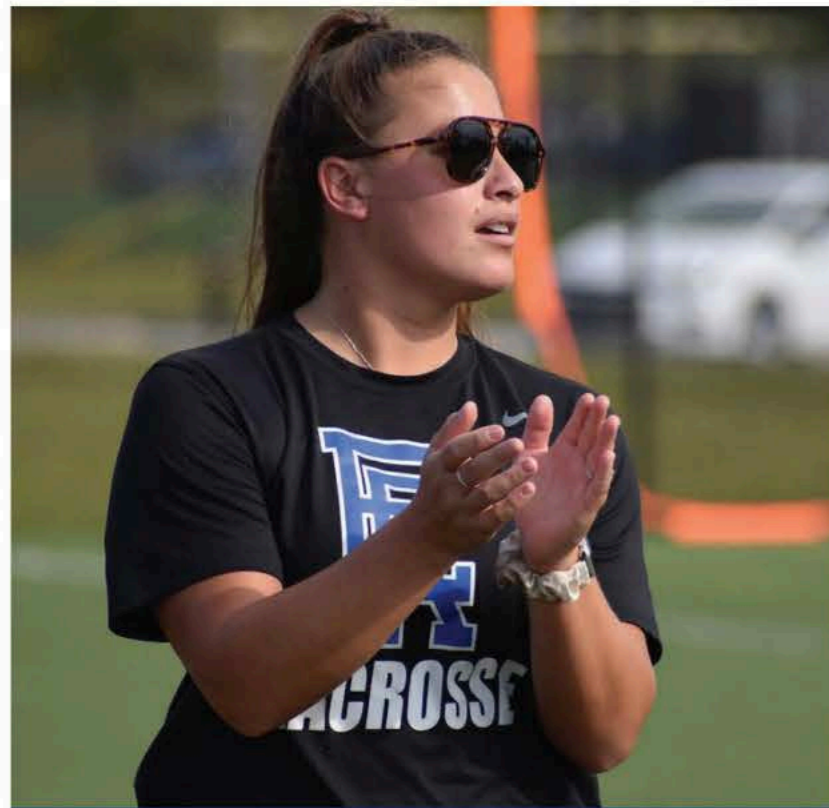
center are best in class, but we desperately need a new field house and baseball field. We will be working hard over the next few years with our alumni and other parts of our community to see these become a reality as well.”

Portsmouth Abbey School is poised to provide a mission-driven experience for students through athletics for years to come, knowing that investments now and in the future will continue to foster human excellence from generation to generation.

The benefits of the “teacher-coach model” and involvement in Raven athletics yield results beyond the fields of Portsmouth. Whether as a collegiate athlete or later in the working world, many alumni have drawn on their knowledge and experiences from the Abbey long after they have left.

Caitlin Villareal Kenahan '12 enjoyed a sensational collegiate career in lacrosse at Saint Anselm College where she was a four-time Northeast 10 Second Team All-Conference selection and led her team to its first NCAA tournament bid in 2014. She also played for the Boston Storm in the United Women's Lacrosse League, the first professional women's lacrosse league in the United States.

Now the head coach of the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University women's lacrosse team, Villareal Kenahan credits her experience as a Raven with helping her grow as an athlete, teammate and coach. “You have the opportunity to participate in three different sports which makes you such a well-rounded athlete,” she said. “Everyone has the one sport they want to focus on, but having to learn others and maybe not be the star in another sport really helped me grow as an athlete and made me a better lacrosse player.



Caitlin Villareal Kenahan '12 is the head coach of the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University women's lacrosse team.

Being a role player in another sport helped me become a better teammate and understand the game much more. It all translates to me now as a coach, too. I try to talk to my freshman athletes who might not be playing and explain how everyone has a role on a team. That's part of being a successful college athlete. Be coachable, have a great attitude, and work to fill whatever role the team needs you to fill. It doesn't mean you need to be complacent in that role, but accept your role and work every day on getting better. I really feel like I learned so much of that through my experience of being a Raven and it helped me in my career. Now, I want so badly to get that message through to my student-athletes.”

It is a message that Connor Baughan '17 echoed when speaking to parents during the School's 2023 Winter Family Weekend panel, Athletics at the Abbey and Beyond. Baughan was joined by fellow Raven alumni Dr. Gus Gleason '07, Taylor Lough '15 and Claire Davidson '16.

“Challenge and success go hand-in-hand,” said Baughan. After playing successfully in an offensive position throughout his four years at the Abbey, he suddenly found himself being moved to a defensive midfielder position

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— CAITLIN VILLAREAL KENAHAN '12



(L-R) Gus Gleason '07, Connor Baughan '17, Claire Davidson '16 and Taylor Lough '15 were panelists during the Winter Family Weekend presentation “Athletics at the Abbey and Beyond.”

in college at Bentley University. “This was a mental challenge for me—a reality check. I looked in the mirror and told myself that I could either fold to the idea that defense was for those who were not good enough to play offense and score, or I could become the best at the position I was asked to play,” he recalled. “This mindset came from my parents and my time at the Abbey.” His determination led to him being named a senior captain, a Division II All-America First-Team selection by the U.S. Intercollegiate Lacrosse Association, USA Lacrosse Magazine's All-America Second Team and “short stick” Defensive Midfielder of the

Year. He now works as an analyst for the lifestyle brand Vineyard Vines.

“Being a Raven doesn't just challenge you on the field, but in all areas of life,” said Frank Holbrook '08. “I was pushed more in the classroom than I was willing to admit at that time. In a smaller classroom, you can't blend in and slip through the cracks; the teachers are on top of your performance. The Abbey exposed me to people from different backgrounds from all over the country and even the world,” He added. “When I was in college, but even after in the working world, learning how to relate to and work with people who had different experiences than me was important. The time management skills can't be understated either. Balancing your athletics, academics and social aspects of life and how it all fits together. I saw

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— FRANK HOLBROOK '08



Frank Holbrook '08 is the manager for the Newport Gulls in the New England Collegiate Baseball League, the former head baseball coach at Rhode Island College and the assistant coach at Northeastern University.