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LAMORINDA SPORTS

A tale of two sports with Grace Gebhardt



Grace Gebhardt Photo Shirley DeFrancisci, DeF-Stop Photography

By Jon Kingdon

With the majority of the high school sports teams playing simultaneously this past spring, many of the Lamorinda student-athletes were forced or voluntarily chose to focus on one sport. For Grace Gebhardt, it was all or nothing. She was going to play for the varsity lacrosse and basketball teams for the fourth consecutive year with the blessings of her coaches.

Both teams found a way to make it work. Assistant basketball coach Scott Espinosa-Brown said it was just a matter of cooperation between the coaches: "On days when Grace had a lacrosse game, she would practice basketball for a while and then leave for her game. We had a great relationship with Bill Fraser, the head lacrosse coach, and we all worked well together, just trying to do the best we could for the kids."

"It was non-stop transitioning," Gebhardt said. "I was really glad to play for both teams. I only had a couple of situations where we had a game for each sport on the same day. There were days that seemed endless where I would have basketball practice at 3:30 and later that day I would head over to the field for a lacrosse practice or game."

Playing two sports in high school is one thing. As a four-year starter for Acalanes in lacrosse and basketball, Gebhardt had the option to play either sport at the next level, but has opted to only play lacrosse when she begins her college career at UC Davis.

ers encouraging them. She was so hard on herself because she had such high expectations but never on others. No question, she could have played in college in the PAC 12."

It was a case of mutual admiration for Gebhardt and the coaches: "This year was an eye-opening experience and I welcomed so many new faces to the basketball program," Gebhardt said. "Our new coaching staff brought a drive and a new upbeat environment. They were so welcoming which inspired the players to do their best and just enjoy what we had."

All that being said, it was lacrosse that was her favorite sport. "I really like how it's different from every sport with the stick, the layout of the field and the rules," Gebhardt said. "Just the speed of the game and working together with 12 people on the field and seeing what you can do was mesmerizing to me."

With Acalanes having a 44-24 record in Gebhardt's four years on the team and scoring 93 goals with 32 assists this year along with being named Acalanes MVP Female Senior Athlete of the year, there is still one highlight that stands out above the rest: "In my sophomore year, we beat Miramonte in the DAL championship 10-9, and I ended up scoring the winning goal in overtime."

Gebhardt's first lacrosse coach at Acalanes was Courtney Neff, followed by Mary Doyle and then Bill Fraser her last two years. Mark Rurka has been an assistant coach for the Dons for the last five years and has been witness to Gebhardt's growth since in the sixth grade when she began playing for the Tenacity club team. "Grace is the most fluid player I've ever seen with her ambidextrous stick skills," Rurka said. "She is naturally gifted and has put in the time for years. This off-season, Grace did a lot of speed and strength work, and her first step was noticeably faster, showing moves that broke ankles."

Besides her ability on the field, her work as co-captain this year with Coco Fellner also stood out to Rurka: "They really led the team this year and they were the best pair of captains we've had in my time at Acalanes. The girls really respected them and they handled

any situations that came up and were very communicative. Grace is a wonderful kid from a wonderful family. She's been a delight to have on the team for four years and someone I could always count on as a person and as a player."

UC Davis was very much represented on the Acalanes staff, with Neff, Doyle and Rurka all having played lacrosse for the Aggies, so despite having played for three different head coaches, there were little transition issues for Gebhardt: "All of the coaches were similar, but it was our players that were the ones that held it together with each staff. Still, I think it was a positive experience and I learned a lot

from each one of them."

It didn't take more than one visit to UC Davis for Gebhardt to make the commitment to the Aggies. "I really just felt at home at Davis," Gebhardt said. "When I stepped on the campus as a junior, I was overwhelmed with joy and taken in by the experience and I felt at home. All the players were extremely welcoming along with the coaching staff. I couldn't ask for anything more along with the academics. It was just a no-brainer for me. I plan on majoring in graphic design. It's a broad major and we'll see where it takes me."

... continued on Page C2

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The public is hereby notified that the Lafayette School District Governing Board approved the provisional appointment of David B. Smith as Board Member on June 23, 2021, to fill a vacant position created by a Board Member's resignation on May 13, 2021. Unless a petition calling for a special election, containing a sufficient number of signatures, is filed in the office of the county superintendent of schools within 30 days of the provisional appointment, it shall become an effective appointment.

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