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Lamorindans West Temkin and Lindsey Lucas dominating goalies at Princeton



Lindsey Lucas in goal against Cal.

Photo Samantha Toy

By Jon Kingdon

The Princeton men's and women's water polo teams had a lot in common this year. They were both very successful. The men's team finished with a 27-6 record, lost to USC, the ultimate runner up in the NCAA tournament and were ranked seventh in the nation at the end of the year. The women's team had a 30-4 record, lost to USC, the ultimate runner up in the NCAA tournament and were ranked fourth in the nation at the end of the year. And each started a freshman goalie from Lamorinda: West Temkin (Campolindo) and Lindsey Lucas (Miramonte).

Temkin, a three-time All-America at Campolindo, was the first high school freshman to receive an All-America nomination and started half the games at Princeton last season. "There is a misconception that the water polo on the East Coast is lower level," Temkin said. "It is right up there with California and my being able to play on the national teams proves that you can still go to the East Coast and play at a super high level."

At Miramonte, Lucas was a USA Water Polo Academic All-American three times, the Cal-Hi Sports North Coast Section Scholar Athlete of the Year, and a four-time junior Olympian all American. Lucas started every game for Princeton and stopped 57.8% of her opponent's shots and even scored a goal. "I've always loved to play the field as well as in the goal and when someone drew a 5-meter penalty, my coach let me go in and shoot it and that was my one goal for the season," Lucas said. For her efforts, Lucas was named to the third team All-American and was named to the first team in the NCAA tournament.

"I knew that I was going to be the goalie before I arrived because my coach, Derrick Ellingson, told me that they did not have a returning goalie and I was going to be the team's goalie," Lucas said.

Lucas is still not satisfied with her play despite having such a dominant season: "I still feel that I can get better in every area, particularly in communicating with my team. We ran a lot of different defenses in preparation for our games, which was great to have in my toolbox because I was used to

just running a press, so I've learned a lot more that way."

The Princeton men's and women's teams made West Coast swings which enabled Temkin and Lucas to see many of their high school and club teammates: "It's the best because I know players on most of the teams, and after the games, I get to see everyone and be able to spend time with them and their parents and that was great," Temkin said. "It is a small community and it was often like a reunion."

The academic demands at a school like Princeton are high, exacerbated by playing a varsity sport. Temkin was also a three-time scholar athlete in high school which helped in his adjustment to Princeton. His major is in the School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA), which is a combination of international relations public policy, economics and politics. "Princeton is obviously a difficult school, but I've learned a great deal and have been taking some very interesting classes," Temkin said. "Not surprisingly, the most interesting classes are also the hardest ones. I'm only going to be here for four years, and I see it as an opportunity to invest in my future and I'm really enjoying it and am looking forward to next year."

During the season, the demands are that much tougher. "The season was the hardest time of the year for me, by far," Temkin said. "I happened to take some very difficult courses during the water polo season and with a lot of traveling, I would be doing my schoolwork on a bus, at airports and on planes. During the week, we would practice twice a day along with weight training. There were times when I would stay up until 2 or 3 in the morning, get up at 10, go to class, practice, lift, practice, eat, study go to bed and then repeat the process. When you have 30 teammates going through the exact same thing, it does make you feel a lot better."

Lucas went through the travails of playing and keeping up with her studies. "During the season, we take a lighter workload," Lucas said. "There is also a lot of support and understanding from your teammates and a lot of resources if you need it so they make it a lot easier to manage your time. The water polo programs at East Coast schools such as Princeton

and Harvard have less of a time commitment than the big four water polo schools in California. This leaves more time for players to focus on their schoolwork and social lives. I believe this balanced college experience is extremely beneficial to our mental health and team culture, two factors that are huge in creating success."

Still, Lucas would need to utilize whatever opportunities she had to complete her school work: "There were a lot of days where we were taking a five-hour bus ride coming back from a game and I was writing a full essay that needed to be turned in right when we got off the bus. You make it work and its fun being on a bus with all of your friends and there are traditions that we did like singing karaoke. My song was 'Life is a Highway.'"

Even when he wasn't playing for Princeton, Temkin had to find a way to keep up with his schoolwork as he was going through tryouts for the US Men's under 21 team that recently competed at the Junior World Championships in Romania.

"It was pretty tough balancing this with my schoolwork because it was a six-hour flight to the West Coast and then getting to and from the airport over a 48-hour period," Temkin said. "I would try and do my work on the plane and in the end, I got it done."

The tournament began after Temkin's school year had ended. "I had finished my classes for that semester but some of my teammates from UCLA and Stanford were taking finals that were proctored by our coach which fortunately was something that I did not have to deal with," Temkin said.

Once the U.S. team was whittled down from 50 to 15 players, preparation for the tournament began in earnest. "We would have national league weekends with teams like the New York Athletic Club, The Olympic Club and the L.A. Athletic club, training in northern and southern California," Temkin said. "Prior to leaving for Serbia for a mini-tournament and Romania, we trained with the UCLA and USC teams."

The tournament was held in Bucharest and Temkin came away with a great appreciation for the city: "Bucharest is a beautiful city and I loved it

there. It's a combination of old and new architecture. There were buildings that were very old on the bottom and modern sections built right on top of it. The city is starting to become more modern, but it also maintains an old feeling to it. The food was very good, and it was inexpensive so that was a plus."

The U.S. team, comprised of amateurs, faced a number of teams that were made up of professionals. "The competition was unreal, but we had a really strong team," Temkin said. "A number of the players that we were competing against were already under contract and making money playing water polo and the ones that did not have contracts were trying very hard to get a contract to feed their families, so they did seem to play with more passion."

The U.S. team would go on to win the bronze medal defeating Greece 11-6, the first ever medal for a USA men's national team at a world championship at any age. Temkin was named the tournament's top goalkeeper with 12 saves in the medal round and a total of 66 saves in the team's seven games.

"The shooters were really good, but I treated all of our opponents similarly and I treated each shot one at a time, sticking to my foundation, my basic principles of how to block and how I play the game and it worked out in the end," Temkin said. "My save percentage was 67% but I couldn't have done it with my teammates. My parents (Michael and Heidi) were in attendance and my mom told me that she was tearing up in the stands when I won the best goalie award."

Temkin's ultimate goal? "I am pointing to making the 2028 Olympics team in Los Angeles which would be awesome. There is a lot of work to be done but I have confidence in myself, and I know that people have confidence in me to work it out and I believe I can do it."

Lindsey Lucas also has made her way to Europe this summer, but for more academic reasons, attending the London School of Economics, getting class credit at Princeton studying micro-economics. "After I finish my class, my family will be coming over and we will be taking a family vacation," Lucas said.

Lucas is focused on only playing for Princeton. "I was never into that kind of Olympic Development Program where you start when you are young and serves a pipeline to the national team," Lucas said. "I did play for the U.S. National Youth Team in high school and went to Greece to compete, but it just wasn't my thing, so I quit that team and I haven't done it since."

Temkin and Lucas have been there for each other all year. "I got a lot of support from West, and he would come to some of our practices to try and stay in shape," Lucas said. "We watched his final game in Romania, and he really played phenomenally."

Temkin shared his appreciation of Lucas' performance. "We're good friends and she was awesome this season," Temkin said. "We talked about water polo and playing goalie a good amount. Our team would go to their games, and they would go to our games."



Photo provided

West Temkin with 3rd place trophy and bronze medal.

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