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Miramonte girl's lacrosse coach heading to law school

By Jon Kingdon



Jackie Pelletier Photo Mark Bell

When the Lamorinda girls lacrosse teams began play last spring, there were two new head coaches: Acalanes' Giles Imrie and Campolindo's Stephen Lineweaver, with Miramonte's Jackie Pelletier entering her ninth season at Miramonte. At the conclusion of this season, Pelletier's teams had an overall record of 123-59, (67%) and two North Coast Section championships. However, next year, Imrie and Lineweaver will be the coaches with the most experience as Pelletier will be attending law school at either U.C. Davis or Santa Clara.

For Pelletier, the oldest of four children from Andover, Massachusetts, sports were a key part of her upbringing. "My father and grandfather were coaches, so I played every sport under the sun including ice hockey," Pelletier said. "Lacrosse was the last sport I picked up. I was in the seventh grade and my dad urged me to try it once. As it turned out, I fell in love with the sport because it was so different from everything else I had played. As I grew up, my dad being there for all of my sports games was truly special to me because he was such a huge part of my

playing sports."

Pelletier had a lot of success playing club lacrosse, and in her junior year at Andover, she was recruited by Theresa Sherry, the head coach at the University of California and the creator of the Tenacity Project club lacrosse team. "I really wanted to go to a school that was a great academic school, and to try something new far away from home and at the time Cal had a super strong lacrosse program," Pelletier said.

At that point there was a budget crisis in the athletic department at Cal and they announced that the rugby, baseball, gymnastics, and lacrosse teams were being eliminated. "I had spent countless hours working towards this dream of playing college lacrosse and we were all kind of blindsided," Pelletier said. "With a lot of fund raising and the threat of a Title IX lawsuit, the teams were reinstated after eight months, but it put a damper on the program with three of my teammates having already transferred and Coach Sherry resigning."

Pelletier started on defense her last two years and she does not look back on her career with any regrets: "I have so much love for Cal and being a collegiate athlete for four years is a huge part of who I am and it really taught me how to balance my time. Looking back it was the perfect fit for me."

Pelletier's academic focus was in Interdisciplinary American Studies, which was essentially a major in business marketing with a minor in sociology. "At Cal, rather than being locked into the specific classes in a major, I was allowed to design my own course load as long as I met with an advisor and detailed in writing why the classes I took were going to combine into one focus," Pelletier said.

In October 2014, after graduation, Pelletier began working as a compliance analyst at Duff and Phelps, a consulting firm in San Francisco that worked directly with private equity firms, hedge funds, venture capital firms, 40 act funds and more, conducting legal and regulatory research and analysis to support client inquiries, as well as developing client specific policies and procedures.

"With my business and marketing degree, I thought that would be the focus in my job but it was the legal side that ended up appealing to me more," Pelletier said. "Having dealt with the Title IX issues in college, it really put me on the path to be passionate about legal studies."

After graduating, Pelletier was asked to become an assistant lacrosse coach for Devin Combs with the Miramonte girls team. "I was still in the lacrosse competitive mindset and not ready to hang up my cleats and quickly agreed to come out and help coach."

Without a car, Pelletier relied on Bart for transportation. "Looking back it was quite a journey but I had so much passion for it that it really was a no brainer for me and that's how I got I got started in coaching, one year as an assistant coach and when Devin moved on, I became the head coach the next nine years."

Combs would eventually come back to coach at Campolindo. "It was definitely fun to coach against Devin over those years since we had remained good friends," Pelletier said. "The Lamorinda community is so tight, it was a really fun experience which fostered the high level of the sport."

Still, there was an adjustment period and one of growth for Pelletier: "I was eager to coach but I had no idea what it was going to be like, being responsible for a group of 30 teenage girls. The first thing I needed to do was to find my voice and become an educator, having to account for my players learning styles and really instruct them. I really grew a lot of patience because that age group can be hard to work with, but it was so rewarding as well."

The decision to go to law school for Pelletier was a long time coming. "It was always in the back of my mind and my first boss out of college was a lawyer. I really enjoyed the use of language and how you could apply it to reasoning and I felt that my job track would eventually lead me to a law degree. After Covid, it really started to dawn on me that sports and women in sports was something that has always been a huge part of my life and I hope to parallel and maybe end up in something like that."

It's been said that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, and Pelletier sees that parallel going into law with her coaching experience. "Getting a group of girls from one starting point to the other, mitigating all the adversity and having them share a common goal, that was what brought me joy, whether or not we won games or championships. I developed the ability to maintain my poise through all of it which I truly believe has prepared me for law school."

Pelletier is still not ready to give up the game. "The game is still part of me so I don't think I can go cold turkey. I've told the youth club teams and Miramonte that I would love to come out at least once or twice a week and to help out where I can."

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