Loy Norrix Seniors Dedicate Extra Time to Prepare for College

Carly Wheaton
Copy Editor

For the senior class of 2008, the past four years of Loy Norrix sports seemed to be missing something. Whether there were no spectators with school spirit to cheer for a winning team, or the team itself seemed to be missing an element that would have lead them to victory, the seniors have been left wanting more.

Although the Loy Norrix sports reputation is not what many may have hoped for, our class has churned out at least fifteen athletes who feel prepared to pursue varsity college sports. Ten of these athletes have spoken directly with coaches and specific colleges and have provided verbal commitments that has placed them on the fast track to success at the next level of various competitive sports. Dedication to your individual sport is key, and many of LN's top athletes spend much of their leisure time training and practicing to achieve their goals.

Senior Mark Denenfeld has spent four years training with LN's Varsity Men's Tennis team and is now committed to play for Kalamazoo College in the coming school year. Before finishing out his high school season as an All-State athlete in the 1 Singles flight, he participated in United States Tennis Association National and Regional Tournaments as well as consistent private lessons. With all this preparation, Denenfeld has high ambitions for his college career.

"I'm hoping to play in the top 3 or 4 as a freshman and by sophomore year I'm expecting [the team] to compete for the National Championship," said Denenfeld.

He is not only looking forward to better competition, but also towards the social benefits of playing a college sport.

He said, "It will be a closer team [than high school], I will spend pretty much the whole year with them. It should be like having instant friends going into college."

The most important element of Denenfeld's success was his dedication to the sport outside of Loy Norrix's season. Senior Addie Drillock agrees and knows that college will require more than just talent. Planning to run track for Michigan State University, a major Big Ten school, Drillock feels prepared for the new sports scene.

"I'm expecting [college track] to challenge me a lot more than high school track does, but there will be more of a team atmosphere because everyone has the same mindset and ambitions." said Drillock.

Like Denenfeld, she attributes much of her success to the time she spent outside of season.

"I stayed serious in high school, dedicated a lot of time and ran over the summer to stay in shape for the next season," she said.

Most of all, Drillock is excited to meet other runners her age she would have never met without the college experience. She believes it will be a great opportunity to race kids from various places who will bring a whole new spectrum of competition.

The graduating seniors going on to play college sports represent almost every sport offered at the high school level at LN, including Lacrosse, a fairly new sport to Kalamazoo. Even though the sport has only been offered for a few years, senior Trevor Pellerito has been able to grow into an exceptional Lacrosse player who will continue his career at Western Michigan University in the fall. This spring only marks Pellerito's second season playing for the Kalamazoo United team, a co-op team of Loy Norrix and Kalamazoo Central. Last season he was named for the second All-Conference Team and as the Defensive Player of the Year, and is now a captain of the team.

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Trevor Pellerito is just one of the many Loy Norrix seniors who will be playing college sports next year. Pellerito was named Defensive Player of the Year in 2007 and after leading the team as captain this year, will continue his Lacrosse career at Western Michigan University.

"I'm looking forward to the tougher competition," said Pellerito who is excited for the new challenges and benefits of college level sports.

He played all year round and tried running and soccer as ways to stay in shape. Pellerito also worked on his hand-eye coordination by simply playing catch with a teammate or "wall ball" on his own.

Planning to live in WMU's "Lacrosse House" that is designated for their players, Pellerito is expectant that the team will be much closer than any high school team.

Another LN senior who has been preparing for college athletics is Lashana Johnson who will be playing basketball for Kellogg College next year. She says that not knowing anyone from the team will be different from high school ball because LN's women's basketball team were generally very close, but after about a month she believes everyone at Kellogg will begin to get more comfortable with each other. Johnson is somewhat apprehensive about the college basketball court differences but is overall excited to start basketball at the collegiate level.

"I'm prepared for it and I'm willing to work hard and do my best. The coach is going to expect us to work for our spots and I expect myself to live up to my ability and get a starting spot," said Johnson.

With three years of LN varsity basketball as well as some travel experience under her belt, Johnson claims that taking her personal time to practice with her coach was the best preparation she has had for her upcoming college experience.

There are many other LN seniors that have decided to pursue varsity sports in college and the one common denominator among them all is the complete dedication of their personal time in addition to their high school season. Even though statistics place Loy Norrix below most schools in many of our sports, it is crucial to realize that there are many LN athletes who have been prepared for the next level of sports by their participation in Loy Norrix sports.