Female Hockey Player Brings Diversity to Team

Amy Halpern
Staff Writer

Looking at the Loy Norrix Hockey roster for this season, it would be an easy mistake to assume Taylor Laning to be a boy's name. However, not only is Laning the only girl on the team, but also the only girl in the entire league.

Although most girls would shudder at the thought of chasing a lightening fast puck across the ice while surrounded by huge men, Laning, a freshman at LN, lives for the game.

Laning began skating in first grade with the dream of becoming a figure skater. However, her older brother, Chad Laning, former LN hockey player, would not allow his little sister to follow that path. Instead, he steered her toward the family tradition of hockey.

"My whole family plays, and I just like being a part of it," said Laning of hockey. She also added that while her family is very supportive of her playing, her mother does worry about injuries.

Being the only girl can have its ups and downs. Laning has to dress separately from the rest of the team before and after every practice and game.

"I wouldn't mind having another girl on the team. It gets lonely in the locker room," said Laning.

She also finds herself feeling left out when the guys joke around sometimes, but does not always mind too much that she's not included.

Teammate Aaron Moshoginis, freshman at LN, agrees that she was treated a little differently. "[The team treated her] differently at first, but now they're just starting to treat her like a teammate like everyone else."

But most of the time Laning feels that the team treats her the same as the rest of the guys. Moshoginis also thinks Laning is treated as just another member of the team. "We all just still out there to play hockey and do the same thing," said Moshoginis.

Laning feels the extra pressure of having to perform better than some of the other guys.

"They always say girls can't play hockey, and I just want to show them that I can," said Laning. It's hard to be a freshman on any varsity team, but especially in a sport where strength and size matter.

Most teams don't realize Laning is a girl even after they play because she keeps her hair tied up in her helmet. That is, they don't realize she's a girl until Laning removes her bright pink mouth guard, which very few male hockey players use. While some teams argue that a girl shouldn't be playing at all, others simply try to take her out on the ice.

"Throughout years of playing, they target me. It hurts a lot," said Laning.

The issue becomes so serious that even her coaches don't allow her to play in some games.

"They don't let me play against Mattawan because it's a rough team," said Laning.

Once the teams find out that a girl is on the ice, she gets pushed down and checked a lot.

"[I] get back up and act like it doesn't hurt," Laning explained.

Although Laning is sometimes targeted while playing with the guys on the ice, she says she'd rather play men's hockey than women's.

"I've seen [women's] college and high school play, it's too slow," said Laning. She enjoys the fast paced enthusiasm of men's hockey, and would not enjoy the no checking rule of women's hockey.

Laning spends time with many team members off the ice and enjoys playing with her team.

"The guys treat me like a little sister. They protect me out there. It's like I have 17 older brothers," Laning said.

Moshoginis added, "She adds a bond to the team cause it's more diverse."

As for any other girls wishing to play Laning said, "Just because they say girls can't play doesn't mean they can't. Go for it!"

AMY HALPERN / KNIGHT LIFE

Freshmen Taylor Laning lines up for a practice shot before her game against Portage Central.

Peak Performers in Sports

Amy Halpern
Maggie Sikkema
Daedal Derks
Staff Writers

Name: Isaac Willhite
Grade: Senior
Sport: Basketball

Senior Isaac Wilhite has been playing basketball for 14 years and has been on varsity for three of his four years on the Loy Norrix Men's Basketball team.

"I always wanted to play cause my brothers played," said Wilhite.

Although basketball is Wilhite's favorite sport, he has sustained multiple injuries. These include two sprained ankles, one from jumping and the other "I was trying to get through a pick and I got tripped." He also obtained a fractured wrist from falling on his hand and a torn thumb ligament from a caught thumb on the rim while going up for a dunk.

The basketball team members are also striving for excellence off the court this season.

"As a team goal we want [to be] academic all-state," Wilhite added, which means having a team GPA of 3.5 or higher.

As for Wilhite's personal season goals, "I'd like to win 15 games, the district championship and have a successful, injury free season."

Name: Howard Tobochinik
Grade: Junior
Sport: Wrestling

Junior Howard Tobochnik has been wrestling for four years and has been on varsity for three. He has a personal record of 70 wins and 35 losses.

"I like going all out and giving full effort and seeing what I can accomplish. I know the harder I work the more wins I get", said Tobochnik. He competed at the state level his freshmen year and he hopes to place at least 4th at the state level this year.

Due to wrestling being such a rough sport Tobochnik has sprained his fingers and his wrist. Tobochnik also got mono and the flu during last season which put wrestling on hold during that time. Along with the actual wrestling comes a lot of conditioning as well.

"I run sprints and [up and down] stairs, and I go to the gym," said Tobochnik.

Allegan and Rockford are some of the tougher schools for Tobochnik to compete against.

Name: Stuart Gagie
Grade: Senior
Sport: Swimming

Senior Captain Stuart Gagie has been swimming ever since he entered high school as a freshman. His events are the 50 and 100 yard freestyle, and he is also a member of most of the relay teams.

Although Stuart himself is a very powerful swimmer and competed at State for two indvidual events and two relays last year, he is primarily focused on team goals and expectations for this season. He enjoys the comradery of the team and loves their prospects this season, which kicks off Wednesday, December 5th.

The Loy Norrix swim team has improved since Gagie's first year on the team in 2004 and they are hoping to do even better this year.

"We'd love to get second in conference behind Battle Creek Lakeview and have a winning season," said Gagie.

One of Gagie's favorite memories on the swim team was last year when they beat Battle Creek Central for the first time in Loy Norrix history.

Recent News: Loy Norrix beat K-Central (72-69) at KC on December 13th. GO LN!

Name: Isaac Willhite
Height: 6'2.5"
Grade: Senior
Position: Small Forward / Power Forward
Years playing Basketball: 14
Years on LN Varsity: 3
Strength: Clutch
Goal for this Year: Win 15 games
NBA Player Resemblance: LeBron James
22

Name: Raymond "Rump" Hall
Height: 6'2"
Grade: Senior
Position: Guard / Forward
Years playing Basketball: 14
Years on LN Varsity: 4
Strength: Good shooter
Goal for this Year: Win
NBA Player Resemblance: LeBron James
23

Name: Max "Max Max" Klepper
Height: 6'4"
Grade: Sophomore
Position: Forward
Years playing Basketball: 11
Years on LN Varsity: 2
Strength: Tall
Goal for this Year: Win districts
NBA Player Resemblance: Dirk Nowitzki
4

Name: Alex "Schmidty" Schmidt
Height: 6'2"
Grade: Senior
Position: Forward
Years playing Basketball: 10
Years on LN Varsity: 1
Strength: Playing hard
Goal for this Year: Win districts
NBA Player Resemblance: Bill Laimbeer
32

Name: Quinntrai "Fats" Lampkins
Height: 6'0"
Grade: Junior
Position: Small Forward / Guard
Years playing Basketball: 9
Years on LN Varsity: 2
Strength: Good shooter
Goal for this Year: Win 15 games
NBA Player Resemblance: Daniel Gibson
2

Name: Demetrius "Meche" Frierson
Height: 5'11"
Grade: Junior
Position: Power Forward / Small Forward
Years playing Basketball: 6
Years on LN Varsity: 1
Strength: Strong
Goal for this Year: Win 15 games
NBA Player Resemblance: Ben Wallace
14

Name: Deontae Alexander
Height: 6'0"
Grade: Junior
Position: Forward
Years playing Basketball: 14
Years on LN Varsity: 1
Strength: Good rebounder
Goal for this Year: Do good on varsity
NBA Player Resemblance: Kevin Garnett
33

Name: Jeffrey "Jeff-Jeff" Hoskins
Height: 5'11"
Grade: Sophomore
Position: Guard
Years playing Basketball: 2
Years on LN Varsity: 1
Strength: Good shooter
Goal for this Year: Win 15 games
NBA Player Resemblance: Tracy McGrady
10

Name: Andrae "Drae" Greer
Height: 5'7"
Grade: Junior
Position: Guard
Years playing Basketball: 7
Years on LN Varsity: 2
Strength: Quick
Goal for this Year: Win 15 games
NBA Player Resemblance: Dwyane Wade
5

Name: Leo Gray
Height: 5'6"
Grade: Junior
Position: Point Guard
Years playing Basketball: 3
Years on LN Varsity: 2
Strength: Quick
Goal for this Year: Win 15 games
NBA Player Resemblance: Allen Iverson
3

Name: Jordan Laney
Height: 6'0"
Grade: Senior
Position: Forward/Center
Years playing Basketball: 10
Years on LN Varsity: 2
Strength: Rebounder
Goal for this Year: Win 15 games
NBA Player Resemblance: Paul Pierce
42

Name: E. Jacob "JT" Tanner
Height: 6'2"
Grade: Senior
Position: Forward / Center
Years playing Basketball: 7
Years on LN Varsity: 2
Strength: Always positive
Goal for this Year: Have a winning season
NBA Player Resemblance: Tim Duncan
24