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By raising the bar on its athletics programs, **Perkiomen School** helps student athletes make an impact on the field of play and far beyond.

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Competitive EDGE

By raising the bar on its athletics programs, Perkiomen School helps student athletes make an impact on the field of play and far beyond.

by **MINDY TORAN** | photography by **JODY ROBINSON**

In the world of athletics, they say it's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game.

This philosophy is the cornerstone of the athletics program at the Perkiomen School, an independent, co-educational boarding and day college-preparatory school in Pennsburg, where the culture of team sports focuses on far more than wins and losses. The program plays a significant role in helping students accomplish their goals, both on and off the field.

In fact, Perkiomen is stacking the odds on its students' success with renewed attention to its athletics programs. The School, which serves students in grades six through 12 and post graduation, recently added four college-level coaches and two All-American athletes to its athletics department.

"In admissions, we bring in great kids—outstanding students and those with potential," says Head of School Mark A. Devey. "Why not bring in students who also want to excel in athletics? Playing sports is a vital part of our school experience. For many of us, they represent some of the most memorable experiences of our lives."

Athletics have always played an important role at Perkiomen. All students are required to participate in an afterschool activity each trimester, which can include a variety of varsity, junior varsity, and middle school

sports. There is a sport, and playing time, for every student, whether they come with experience or desire to try a new sport. Afternoon activities also include theater, art, and music and dance programs, as well as nationally renowned entrepreneur, medical, and artificial intelligence institutes.

"By combining high-quality sports programs with the best arts and academic programs, in a school where students can receive the individual attention that a school of under 350 students can provide, we are building a foundation for life," says Devey. "Our focus on hiring highly experienced coaches to run our athletics programs has allowed us to quickly elevate our program, and the superior coaching staff is developing our athletes to compete at the next level."

"We already have a thriving, globally diverse student body," he continues. "We know by growing and expanding our program in a way that will draw and develop outstanding student athletes to our school that we will continue to thrive and be a better institution."

Three full-time college counselors assist all students and their families in finding the school that is the best match for them. An increasing number of the school's student athletes are moving on to earning scholarships at top universities. In the past three years, Perkiomen has sent student athletes to



Boston University, Columbia University, Lafayette University, Lehigh University, Navy, Princeton University, the University of Virginia, and Villanova University.

"Right now, our baseball team can compete with anyone in the region, and our boys' basketball team, under the leadership of Thomas Baudinet, can compete with anyone in the nation," says Devey. "Now our focus moving ahead is on elevating lacrosse, girls' volleyball, and soccer."

A Solid Foundation

Director of Athletics Ken Baker has built a solid foundation for successful sports programming through his leadership of the school's baseball and basketball programs.



students to the school, compete at the highest level against the best schools, and prepare our students for whatever comes next, on or off the field.”

Working side by side with Kruger is Nicole Meehan, who joined Perkiomen in October after spending five seasons as head women’s lacrosse coach at Shippensburg University and two years as an assistant coach at York College of Pennsylvania. Meehan will serve as the new head coach of the girls’ lacrosse team, as well as an associate director of admissions and financial aid.

“Nicole is a great fit for our institution because she can trans-

kids are coming here for the right reasons, they’re great institutional fits, and we can help them reach whatever goals they have, in lacrosse and beyond.”

A Springboard to Success

One of the unique aspects of Perkiomen’s athletics program is the fact that students are encouraged to play multiple sports, as well as pursue other interests that excite them—robotics, the arts, volunteering, entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence and emerging technology, and medical science.

“What we’re doing here is unique,” says Kruger. “There’s a tendency and a push in our society for our kids to specialize—whether it’s athletics, academics, or another extracurricular activity. At Perkiomen, we don’t want kids to just play one sport. We’re providing

Participation in athletics can create experiences that the kids will take with them well beyond the athletic field.

—HEAD OF SCHOOL MARK A. DEVEY



Perkiomen is now looking to expand and propel its athletics programs into the future by hiring coaches that, in addition to being a good fit for the institution, have extensive background and experience in the individual sports they coach.

“Our focus is on bringing in faculty who are experienced coaches, not just academic instructors who are running afterschool sports activities,” says Baker. “We’re hiring coaches to be coaches, who can run our athletic programs in addition to their other responsibilities on campus.”

One of those new coaches is Mike Kruger, named Perkiomen’s director of lacrosse operations in March 2021. Kruger, who has 13 years of experience coaching lacrosse at the Division I, Division III, and high school levels, will oversee both the boys’ and girls’ lacrosse teams at Perkiomen.

“Our goal is to build a nationally competitive lacrosse program with equal emphasis on both the boys’ and girls’ programs,” says Kruger. “We want to build both programs in a way that enables us to attract the right

late the skillset she has built at the college level so that it has a greater impact on our school community,” says Kruger. “If you want to build and expand athletics in a boarding-school community, college is a pretty good place to look. In addition, we were looking for coaches who can have a significant impact on kids beyond wins and losses. It takes a certain type of person to really be successful as a coach, teacher, and mentor in this environment, where you’re so involved in these kids’ lives. It’s important to find people who want to make an impact beyond the field.”

Meehan, who grew up in the area she is once again calling home, says she looks forward to joining the Perkiomen family and building upon the existing girls’ lacrosse program. She expects to take the team to the next level and continue to attract competitive student athletes.

“We’re looking to elevate the girls’ lacrosse program and eventually compete against the best,” says Kruger. “Over the long term, we want to be a school where

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kids with an opportunity to mini-specialize. They can play lacrosse, baseball, basketball, or whatever they like, but we’re also encouraging them to pursue their other passions, whether it’s sports, participating in the school play, or volunteering in the community.”

At its heart, Perkiomen aims to meet the individual needs of each student and provide student athletes with a springboard to success for the future. Devoy says that applies whether students continue to play competitive athletics in college or wherever life takes them next.

“Team sports are such a critical part of school life,” he says. “Participation in athletics can create experiences that the kids will take with them well beyond the athletic field.” ■