

Madison Jiranek Wraps Up Penn Freshman Year as Dual-Sport Athlete

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University of Pennsylvania field hockey and lacrosse player, Madison Jiranek had a remarkable first year. The Richmond, Va. native — a high school All-American lacrosse and All-State field hockey player — was a contributor to both Penn teams from the get-go. On the hockey pitch, Jiranek played in 16 of the Quakers' 17 games; in lacrosse, she was a contributor to the team that advanced to the NCAA Tournament, playing in all but three matches and starting in 7.

Jiranek, who was recruited for both sports and struggled with deciding which to pursue, said that a comment from field hockey head coach, Coach Fink brought everything to light.

"I was actually on two separate recruiting tracks, considering some schools for field hockey and others for lacrosse. It was a little crazy sometimes traveling between different prospect camps, playing field hockey one day and lacrosse the next. I love both sports, but I never really considered playing both in college until Coach Fink suggested it during one of our first telephone conversations after googling my name and seeing a video of me playing lacrosse. She put me in touch with Coach Corbett and I got really excited about the possibility of continuing to play both sports in college. When the Penn coaches offered me the opportunity to play both, I was sold."

Fink and Corbett are thrilled that Jiranek took the leap to play both sports — a rarity among Division I athletes.

"Madison is the type of athlete that adds a spark that helps the flame burn brighter," said Fink. "She is tenacious, energetic, feisty and resilient. She is willing to take risks and doesn't fear failure out on the field. Her offensive skills took form this fall and she was a real threat in our attacking third. She will definitely be someone to watch in the Ivy League and nationally on both the hockey and lacrosse fields. We absolutely love having Madison on our team. She adds so much personality, fun and laughter to our locker room."

I caught up with Jiranek, just after freshman year final exams, to find out more about her experience as a double Quaker student-athlete as well as her summer plans.

How do you balance playing both athletically? Do you participate in any training with the teams that are in the off-season?

"The downside (or upside according to my teammates) of playing both sports is that I miss the off-season training for each team. In the fall, I am totally committed to the field hockey team in terms of training, practices, and games. Once field hockey season is over, I get to take two weeks off and then I start practices with the lacrosse team."

How do you balance the athletic travel demands, throughout the entire academic year, with your academic demands?

"Since Fridays are a main travel day for competition in both sports, I arrange my schedule so that I do not have classes on Fridays. In addition, the upperclassmen on both teams help me by giving me academic advice about class selection and time management."

Playing a DI sport all year is also demanding on the body. Do you take extra measures to ensure that you are well physically?

"To be honest, I do not do anything extra compared to my teammates. I make sure that I get enough sleep everyday and I take time to stretch before every practice. In addition, although I despise ice baths, I have started taking them more and more whenever I feel that my body is getting overly sore."

Are there any interesting differences between the two programs in terms of culture, expectations and personnel?

"One of the main differences that I've noticed is the strong culture of extra work present in the lacrosse program. During lacrosse season, we all expect each other to put in additional time and work outside of practice so that we are all sharp and do not have to spend practice time working on any fundamental skills. In addition, the team dynamics are different in my opinion. The field hockey team is smaller but very friendly and welcoming. On the other hand, the lacrosse team is bigger and lots of fun but extremely competitive (in a good way.)"



What's the best part of Penn field hockey?

"I think the team is the best part of Penn field hockey. My field hockey teammates were my first friends at Penn, and now every single member on the team is like family to me. We all get along so well together and everyone brings something different to the team."

What's your best field hockey moment of 2018?

"I think my best field hockey moment was actually during preseason. The team was split up into five different groups and we did a "Chopped"

competition. We had two hours to run to the grocery store, think of a meal to prepare, and cook it to completion. We had judges and everything. It was such a great experience that brought our whole team together. I don't think I've ever laughed as much as I did that day."

What's the best part of being on the Penn lacrosse team?

"Penn Pride. Before every practice and every game, we all come together and yell "Penn Pride" on three. Every player and coach takes such intense pride in the team, the program, and everything that Penn lacrosse has accomplished over the years. There is a certain unmatched wave of emotion that hits me every time I put on my lacrosse jersey because I know how proud I am to be a part of such a well respected program."

Describe how you felt when you scored your first field hockey goal in the game against Columbia:

"I felt ecstatic when I scored my first goal in a Penn jersey. I had been having a lot of close shots and near misses throughout the previous games and I was starting to get a little down on myself. But when Jordyn Thies sent a perfect ball across the circle, all I had to do was dive and tap it in. Immediately, I jumped up and couldn't believe that I had just scored."

And how about after your first lacrosse goal in the game against Northwestern:

"I felt confident in myself when I scored my first lacrosse goal. I had been having a kind of rocky start to the season, being switched from attack to midfield and back to attack again in a matter of weeks. The Northwestern game was the first game in which I started, so my nerves were through the roof. However, when we started playing, our attack felt so natural and my goal felt like it was just another step in the motion."

Are you involved in any student organizations on campus?

"A downside of being so busy with sports is that I don't have much time to devote to other commitments. However, I am involved in a couple of student organizations on campus. I am a member of the Women's Athletic Association, which is a club that promotes awareness of issues within female sports and fosters friendship among all female student-athletes at Penn. In addition, this spring semester, I joined the Chi Omega sorority. Next year, I hope to become more involved with other clubs and organizations, especially groups in Wharton."

What do you plan to major in?

"I am still undecided, but I think that I would like to concentrate in Behavioral Economics. We don't officially have to declare until the end of sophomore year, but I think that's where I'm headed."

What will your summer training look like? Will you be playing in both field hockey and lacrosse summer leagues?

"During the summer, I am going to follow my training packet for field hockey. Although there are no formal field hockey leagues in my area, my high school just installed a new Astroturf field, so I will definitely be playing on that as much as possible. In addition, I will also be joining a small lacrosse summer league in Richmond where I get to play against people of all ages."

Where will you be interning or working this summer?

"I am not working anywhere this summer, but I will be taking classes at the London School of Economics in July. In high school, I had always dreamed of studying abroad in college, but when I decided to play two sports I realized I would not be able to do that. However, I think that being at LSE will be like a mini study abroad and I couldn't be more excited."

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