

Student Athlete Spotlight

Lily Boardman – Driven by determination

Ellie Heben • Staff Writer

Not many ninth graders make varsity in their sport. Even fewer become Division I recruits. But for junior Lily Boardman, defying expectations has become almost routine. Pioneer's women's field hockey team is one of the most rigorous sports offered here, and defending state champions over the course of many years. For most athletes hoping to play field hockey at that level, it takes a portion of the high school experience for development, lots of personal patience, and solid determination. For Boardman though, the varsity journey started early, being one of two ninth graders to make it. Now a junior, and a University of California–Davis Division 1 recruit, her passion for the sport has only grown throughout high school.

Boardman began her journey in third grade when she picked up a stick for the first time. She began playing with her club team during COVID to help her deal with the boredom. She credits the switch to club for her increased knowledge

of the sport, exposure to higher play, and development of a greater determination.

Balancing academics, athletics, and personal lives can be extremely challenging for any student-athlete, and Boardman is no exception. "I always have taken athletics more seriously than school," Boardman honestly states. "(But) I have still always put in tons of effort to get good grades to make my dreams of playing field hockey in college come true."

The season and the recruiting process according to Boardman has only one word to describe it: "rough."

"It was hard, draining, and anxiety-inducing to talk to (college) coaches and figure out which schools wanted me and what I had to do for them to continue to want me."

But now that she's made a college decision, Boardman says the work was well worth it. "Every ounce of blood, sweat, and tears has paid off considering UCD has been my dream school to play for as long as I can remember," she

said, noting that the highlight of her field hockey journey so far has been able "to commit and say with certainty that I'll get to continue my field hockey career in college."

Even with such success, Boardman acknowledges the challenges that "were no small bumps in the road" and often recalls "the minor burnouts I experienced at times." Her advice to others is simple: "If you work hard, good things will happen."

Still, Boardman keeps a grounded perspective. She said while doesn't have a favorite inspirational quote she lives by, one she chose that she says represents her journey well, by Winston Churchill, says: "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."

With that determination, resilience, and a love for her sport, Boardman continues to carve out her path, proving that strength, commitment, and consistency can take one far, on the field and beyond.



Junior Lily Boardman will play field hockey at University of California-Davis.

Being a multi-sport athlete has benefits, both on and off the field

Evangeline Eichinger • Guest Writer

The vast, green, dewy grass fields. The waxy gym floors. The cold, pungent smelling pool. These are the home turf, courts and lanes for countless high school athletes who dedicate hours each week to their sports — and for some students they perform in all of these areas, embracing the challenge of being a multi-sport athlete.

For Pioneer junior Kaia Wong, who plays both volleyball and lacrosse, being a multi-sport athlete is about more than competition — it's about growth both on and off the field.

"Sports are a great way to get outdoors, meet new friends, and get exercise everyday," said Wong. "Playing multiple sports is important because it taught me lots of life lessons and put me in many different situations."

The benefits of playing multiple sports go beyond high school. The recent NFL draft shows that athletes who played multiple sports in high school were more likely to get recruited to play in college. In fact, 88 percent of the 253 athletes selected had played more than one sport in

high school. Among them, Miami quarterback and the No. 1 overall pick Cam Ward who played basketball and football at Columbia High School in Texas.

While many young athletes think that specializing in one sport is the fastest route to success, research shows that it does more harm than good. A study conducted in 2003 suggests early specialization causes increased stress levels, chance of injury, burnout, and perfectionism among teens. Young athletes who focus too intensely on a single sport may lose interest over time or suffer from overtraining. Balancing more than one sport can come with challenges, but it also

helps athletes improve and maintain their mental health.

Dr. Vasilios Moutzourous, chief of sports medicine at Henry Ford Health, said sports play a crucial role in shaping teen athletes far beyond the field.

"There's a huge value in sports in terms of growing a young person's maturity, leadership capabilities, and

humility, because you don't win at everything," Moutzourous said. "All of these qualities translate into success in life as an adult."

A 2020 study in the Orthopaedic Journal of Sports Medicine further supports the benefits of pursuing multiple sports, showing that athletes between 7 and 18 years old — especially females — are at higher risk for overuse injuries if they specialize in just one sport. Overuse injuries affect bones, muscles, tendons, and ligaments, and are often caused from repetitive stress without proper recovery and rest.

Diversifying sports and incorporating recovery into one's daily routine can significantly reduce the risk of injury.

For Wong, balancing volleyball and lacrosse not only helped her avoid injury but also shaped her emotionally and socially.

"Volleyball has taught me how to brush off mistakes," said Wong. "Lacrosse has helped me release my feelings, and it's improved my social awareness and acts as a good emotional release."

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— Physical Education teacher and coach Lawrence DeWolf

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versatility will be better for their health and athleticism.

"Playing multiple sports also gives the athlete an opportunity to develop multi-dimensional athleticism, which will allow them to perform better at each sport," said DeWolf. "Other benefits include lowered instances of overuse injuries."

The Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) promotes the idea that high school athletics is an extension of the classroom. The lessons learned through sports include hard work, determination, perseverance, resiliency, teamwork, cooperation, discipline,

commitment, confidence, being part of something bigger than oneself, success, failure, friendship, and sacrifice are just some of the skills that are developed through participation in high school sports.

Dewolf said that former student athletes from Pioneer remember the experiences and lessons they learned from sports most once their playing days are behind them.

"I have found when talking to former students and student athletes, what they typically remember most is not a specific game here or there, but rather the journey of their time at Pioneer," he said.