



Montclair Athletics: MHS continues to send athletes to top colleges



From left to right: Chloe Rosenberg, Julianna Langhorn (Penn), Kenneth Coplan (Harvard), Owen King (Berkeley), Djoume Traore (Temple), Henry Vecchi-one (Princeton), Kirdon Jones (Sacred Heart), Matthew Niemann (Claremont-McKenna), Charlie Miller (McDaniel), Nora Giordano (Lehigh), Olivia Lynch (Colgate), Dylan Vespole (Scranton), Elizabeth Cummings (Towson), Rebecca VanSiclen (Lehigh), Tarrin Earle (Bucknell), John Auletta (Willam Paterson), Peter Rosenthal (New Jersey City), Ben Sherwin (Columbia) and Zarich Moon-Torkpo (Drew)
COURTESY WIL YOUNG AND DALLAS YOUNG

by Andrew Garda

garda@montclairlocal.news

People often praise student-athletes for their athletic prowess, but for Montclair High School's athletic department, the focus is very much on the student part of the equation.

MHS prides itself on helping students find a way to make it to college, and that is a central aim for both the various coaching staffs as well as the athletic department as a whole.

"Education based athletics is something our entire athletic department prides itself on," said Athletic Director Dr. Patrick Scarpello.

The result is a department which consistently sends athletes off to college, often with partial or full scholarships. This past year was no different for Montclair, as 37 student-athletes will continue their education and sports careers at the collegiate level.

This, of course, does not necessarily take into account athletes who just played with clubs and found college interest that way. Not all of those students let MHS know when that happens. But as you need grades to get

into college, those cases would still be a credit to the teachers who reside in the main building and freshman annex.

The two most successful sports at sending their athletes to play in college are football and crew, with the 2017 North I, Group V champion Mounties are sending 11 athletes to play collegiately, while the equally successful crew squads — the boys recently became the first public school in 10 years to earn a medal at the U.S. Rowing Youth National Championship and will be back at Henley Royal Regatta on Thames River in England — have eight college-bound athletes.

Another commonality among both sports? Athletes going to high learning academic colleges.



Danny Banks, shown here sliding into home plate, will be playing both baseball and football for Wesleyan University.
PHOTO BY ANDREW GARDA/STAFF

Mountie rowers will be competing at four Ivy League colleges — Harvard, Princeton, Brown and the University of Pennsylvania — while football players will be joining teams at colleges like West Point, Bucknell, William & Mary, and Wesleyan.

During a recent workout, head football coach John Fiore said that even if they aren't playing football in college, his team is still heading to challenging institutions of higher learning.

"This senior class that's going out — West Point, William and Mary, Claremont-McKenna, Pomona-Pitzer, Wesleyan, a bunch of state schools, one in Patterson, Kean, Montclair State, Rutgers — all going to college or going to college and playing football, which is what we try to do," he said.

Fiore said he and his coaches hold their team accountable off the field, as well as on it. Even when it's not football season, the kids know Coach Fiore is watching and trying to make sure they do what they are supposed to, and what he knows they are capable of.

That year-round engagement pays off.

"The district talks about the achievement gap and I think for eight years our football program has helped out on the north side of [that]," Fiore said. "The kids that are with us all the time achieve at a very high level academically and go off to college to succeed."

After crew and football, the group from lacrosse was the next largest with five student-athletes (three boys and two girls), followed by four track and field/cross country athletes, a pair from fencing and both genders of soccer, plus one from girls volleyball and one from basketball as well as boys tennis.

Baseball is also represented by Danny Banks, who will be a rare two-sport athlete at the collegiate level at Wesleyan on both the diamond and the football field.

“The Mountie Athletic Department is proud of the class of 2018,” Scarpello said. “We look forward to hearing about the many great successes our most recent alumni will have at the next level.”



Nora Giordano excelled on both the lacrosse and soccer fields, but will be focusing on lacrosse at Lehigh University next year.

ANDREW GARDA/STAFF

Another athlete, a rising senior who is already on to his next journey, is Salvadore Pliego who moved to Mexico City in February where he signed with the professional club Pumas UNAM. He enrolled in an online high school called the Whitmore School in order to complete his U.S. high school degree from abroad, and when he turns 18 in January of 2019, he will officially begin to play pro soccer in Mexico.

Along with Pliego, Montclair high school rising-senior athletes were already signing this spring. Two such examples are Josh Crawford, who committed to play football for Central Michigan in 2019, and Will Schiffenhaus, who will be playing lacrosse for Navy.

Football players Charles Murphy Jr., Willie Matthews and Bo Bigelow are attracting interest already, with Murphy and Matthews considering offers from schools like Rutgers and West Point, and Bigelow looking at Columbia.

Add in some very talented athletes like tennis player Leo Kupferman, lacrosse player Marcos Sanchez, softball player Francesca Testa and soccer goalie Ben Middlemiss, and there's a good chance that the number of Mounties playing at the collegiate level in 2019 won't go down from 2018.