

Ten MICDS Field Hockey Alumnae Shine on the Collegiate Pitch

Did you know MICDS had ten alumnae playing field hockey in college this past fall? **JK-12 English Department Chair and Coach Lynn Mittler** reached out to her former players to find out how they're doing, how their MICDS experience impacts them today, and what they would recommend to Upper School field hockey players.

Kate Oliver '22 plays for Harvard and credits her experience under Coach Mittler for her success today. "MICDS field hockey taught me not only so much tactically but also how to be a good teammate when it comes to doing the work to make others look good and laying everything on the line for the girl next to you," she said. **Hanna Wurdack '21** agrees. She plays for Bowdoin and said, "My field hockey experience from MICDS informed my game today by teaching me both fundamental and high-level skills, a bank of 'tactics,' and a field hockey IQ. MICDS has such a strong, advanced program with skillful players and coaching, which exposed me to a

very high level of field hockey at a young age." **Reagan Calcari '20** is at the University of New Hampshire. She said, "My field hockey experience at MICDS shaped me to be a team player. I learned how to work hard and be a good, competitive teammate." Her sister, **Brecken Calcari '22**, also at UNH, cites the teamwork ethos from MICDS, too. "My MICDS field hockey experience taught me a lot about learning how to mesh well with my teammates and both leading younger players and following/respecting older players," she said. **Caroline Carr '20**, at Dartmouth, notes that she was well-prepared physically for a collegiate career. "Coach Mittler's conditioning at the end of practices got me used to and ready for the demanding conditioning of college field hockey," she said. **Mia Duchars '20**, at University of Louisville, said "My MICDS field hockey experience taught me how to lead and share my experience with younger players and how to be a supportive and encouraging teammate because there were all levels of skill and desire that came together to make the team."

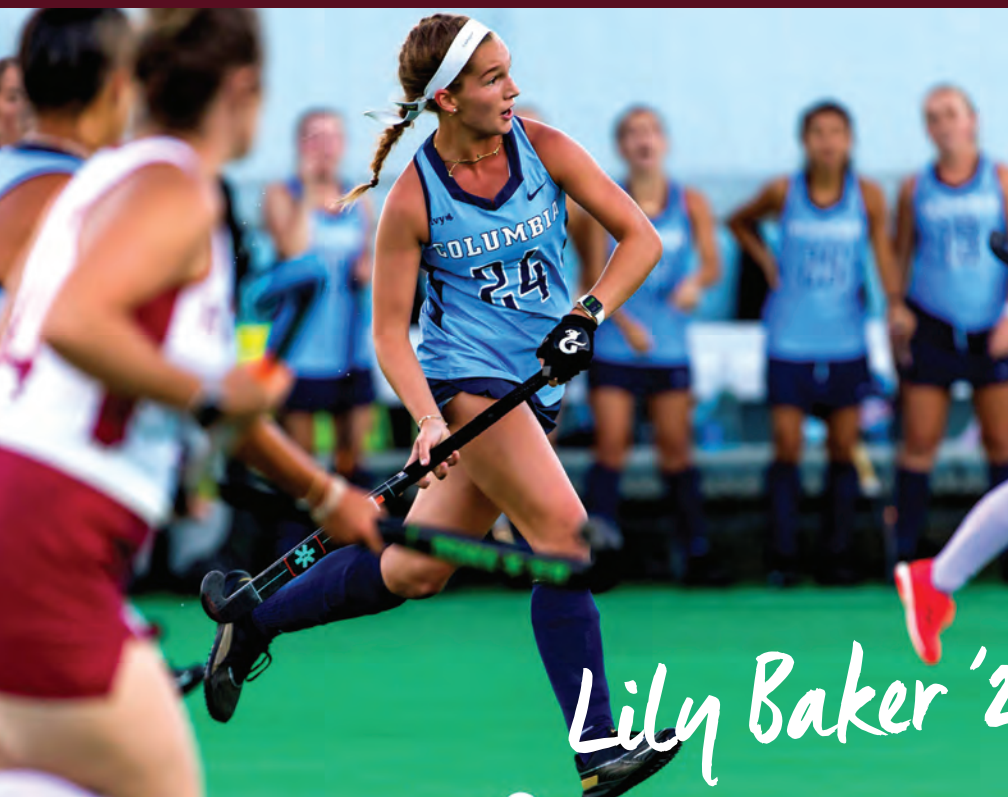
MICDS MEMORIES

Winning the Midwest Championship is a fond memory for many of these players. Oliver and her teammates triumphed despite a roster full of injuries. "We battled through countless injuries, and it was truly one of the most amazing teams I have ever had the privilege to be a part of. I will never forget running down the left baseline and passing the ball to Caroline Carr, who scored with her broken right hand." Reagan said. "My



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Kate Oliver '22, Harvard



Lily Baker '21, Columbia

"I absolutely love playing against former MICDS teammates. Although we are not as friendly in the heat of the game, I always enjoy catching up immediately after with hugs and pictures."

favorite MICDS field hockey memory is winning state in my last high school game with my sister. It was such a team effort and on the third try, we finally beat Villa and won it all."

Lily Baker '21, at Columbia, noted that even though the outcome wasn't what the team wanted in the Midwest Championship of her freshman year, the wonderful memories last forever. "Having won against Villa in the regular season, a close game that ended in shootouts, the championship game was another opportunity to challenge ourselves and leave it all on the field." Duchars' senior year brought victory. "Winning the championship my Senior year has to be one of my favorite memories. Having been in the final the two years before, it was doubly special to finally clinch the win my senior year."

Other players remarked on how they bonded with their teammates. Wurdack said, "My favorite field hockey memory from MICDS was dressing up in our preseason teams." Brecken shared, "During practice my senior year, Mittler had us put blindfolds on, and we had to try to dribble the ball blindfolded with a teammate telling us where the ball was. This was to work on communication, but we might've had too much fun with it!"

SKILLS TO SUCCEED

Now that these student-athletes are playing collegiately, they rely on skills they learned at MICDS to succeed. Wurdack said, "Although the jump from high school to college felt difficult, MICDS gave me a strong foundation of skills that allowed me to adapt and be successful." Duchars agrees. "The MICDS education is really remarkable. It certainly put me in a great place to continue building on what I already know. It also taught me a lot about time management and balance, which is really essential now in college. The writing experience from MICDS prepared me very well for all my classes here," she said.

Brecken said, "MICDS prepared me academically and also prepared me well with skills such as presenting, communicating with teachers, and sending professional emails."

"MICDS really prepared me for Dartmouth in the classroom and on the field," said Carr. "Similar to being a student-athlete at Dartmouth, when I was at MICDS, I had to balance challenging academics with competitive athletics. I learned how to work hard and developed time management skills while at MICDS which I think has allowed me to succeed as a student-athlete at Dartmouth."

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Fall 2023 MICDS Alumnae Field Hockey Players

Reagan Calcari '20,
University of New Hampshire

Caroline Carr '20, Dartmouth College

Skyler Lesslie '20,
Georgetown University

Lily Baker '21, Columbia University

Jenna Bernstein '21,
Washington and Lee University

Hanna Wurdack '21, Bowdoin College

Brecken Calcari '22,
University of New Hampshire

Mia Duchars '20, University of Louisville

Anna Lochhead '22, Colgate University

Kate Oliver '22, Harvard University

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"At MICDS, I learned how to advocate for myself, how to manage my time, how to pursue the things I'm passionate about, how to be a good friend," said Reagan.

THE COST OF COMPETING

While we celebrate the achievements of our amazing student-athletes, especially those who continue competing collegiately, we must recognize that it takes a firm commitment and dedication to play while earning a degree.

Reagan said, "Being an athlete totally changes the college experience. It starts even before high school, thinking about where you want to go to college. The college visits are completely different, being an athlete."

"I don't think most people understand the scope of sacrifices college athletes make," said Oliver. "As a field hockey player, I am on campus two to three weeks before classes start, am restricted by practice in what classes I can take, and am constantly missing social events for practices and games. That being said, I would never want to do college any other way; my teammates and every win make each sacrifice worth it."

"People do not always realize how much effort and grit it really takes to be a college athlete," said Wurdack. "At this level, every single player is talented, and it is really encouraging and competitive."

Brecken agrees. "People don't realize how much time collegiate athletes spend on their sport. The NCAA has a 20-hour rule, so you can only practice 20 hours a week, but that doesn't account for lift, film, treatment, meetings, or team bonding. School revolves around your sport. This is the opposite of high school where your sport revolved around school."

"While it's been one of the most rewarding experiences, there have been a lot of long and tiring days," said Carr. "The specific hours you can practice change in the off-season and as a college athlete you are always practicing or conditioning to prepare for the next season. After all this preparation, there are about 17 games and only 7 of those are conference games each year to put all your hard work and preparation to the test."

"Being a college athlete does involve some sacrifices like missing out on some of the social scene due to traveling or being in season or just



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Reagan Calcari '20,
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Brecken Calcari '22, University of New Hampshire



lack of time, but it also affords you the chance to represent your school, be part of a team, travel, and compete at the highest level in a sport you love,” Duchars said.

Baker also confirms that it’s all worth it, though. “There are a lot of benefits to being a college athlete. Being on a team, you have many past teammates and alumni who can provide guidance and advice regarding internships. This has been super helpful for me when researching job opportunities and preparing for interviews,” she said.

BENEFITS BALANCE IT OUT

“Being an athlete has taught me the importance of sacrifice and being a part of something bigger than yourself,” said Wurdack. “It has also taught me countless lessons about grit and determination by challenging me to manage sports and school simultaneously. It has enabled me to prioritize exercise and have healthy habits that will serve me for the rest of my life.”

“I have gained more skill on the field but also skills such as navigating relationships,” shared Brecken. “With 25 girls who spend a lot of time together, problems are bound to arise, and I have learned how to navigate conflict and talk it out when needed. I think this could be beneficial for me in the future in workplaces where conflicts happen because I will be able to work through any problems.”

“I have gained many communication, leadership, and teamwork skills that I know will be valuable in the future,” said Carr. “While I had known or played with my MICDS teammates for many years prior to high school, the

entire Dartmouth team was new to me, and everyone came with different experiences and strengths. Each year when new recruits joined our team and others graduated, we had to learn to work together to highlight each other strengths and work to resolve any conflict that comes up.”

“I’ve learned how to balance academics with athletics by utilizing office hours and academic advisors,” said Baker. “With daily practices and 30-minute bus rides to and from the field, I’m always finding ways to sneak in extra time to complete homework assignments or read lecture notes. I believe this skill will benefit me in the future, as I will be well prepared to handle multiple large projects simultaneously.”

“I have learned to keep working hard even when you don’t see results and to keep persevering during challenges when things don’t go your way,” said Reagan.

PLAYING CHANGES EVERYTHING

Oliver knows that being a student-athlete in college informs her experience in many ways. “Being an athlete is a major part of my college experience; as my non-athlete friends say, ‘We rarely see you in season, but we know you’re doing what you love all the time,’” she said.

“Being an athlete is really at the center of my college experience,” said Brecken. “It has been great for me because as a freshman, I came into college with an entire friend group already established (my teammates).

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“With over 100 past teams, the MICDS field hockey program has a long history of our players continuing their careers at the college level. I am extremely proud of all of these women and grateful for the tremendous examples of hard work and dedication they set for the future generations.”

COACH LYNN MITTLER



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Mia Duchars '20, Louisville

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This really helped me transition to college because I saw these girls every day, lived with them, and became close with them very quickly. At UNH, the athletic community is really fun to be a part of. All the athletes pretty much know each other, and in classes, athletes tend to sit with other athletes.”

“Being a student-athlete has taught me so many valuable lessons that I will forever be grateful for,” said Carr. “It has provided a lot of structure in my college experience as I am always busy with field hockey commitments or studying. Being on the Dartmouth field hockey team, I’ve had so many amazing teammates who have become my best friends.”

“People don’t realize that the off-season way is harder than being in-season. In season you are focused on games, have a tight schedule and routine, and practices are pretty light to taper for games. Off-season is long and it’s a lot of training and conditioning without any competition. It requires a

lot of focus and grit and discipline,” said Reagan.

RE-CONNECTING ON THE PITCH

These fierce competitors don’t lose their bonds from their MICDS days. They are thrilled to face off against each other in collegiate competition and then connect for hugs and catching up after the timer wears down.

“I absolutely love playing against former MICDS teammates,” said Baker. “Although we are not as friendly in the heat of the game, I always enjoy catching up immediately after with hugs and pictures.”

“Games where I get to play against a former teammate are some of my favorites,” said Oliver. “The bond of being a MICDS field hockey player goes beyond our college rivalries and makes it so much more fun to see each other afterward and send pictures to Mittler. I have been very lucky that

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Hanna Wurdack '21, Bowdoin



even when I don't get to play against former teammates, I can still make it to see them play when possible; the mutual support system we have for each other is amazing."

Duchars agrees. "Facing a former MICDS or club teammate now is such a cool experience. It is so fun to have previously competed with them and now to see them being successful with their own team is really rewarding."

Brecken said, "I love playing against former teammates because it's so cool to see where they are now and what they are still achieving on and off the field."

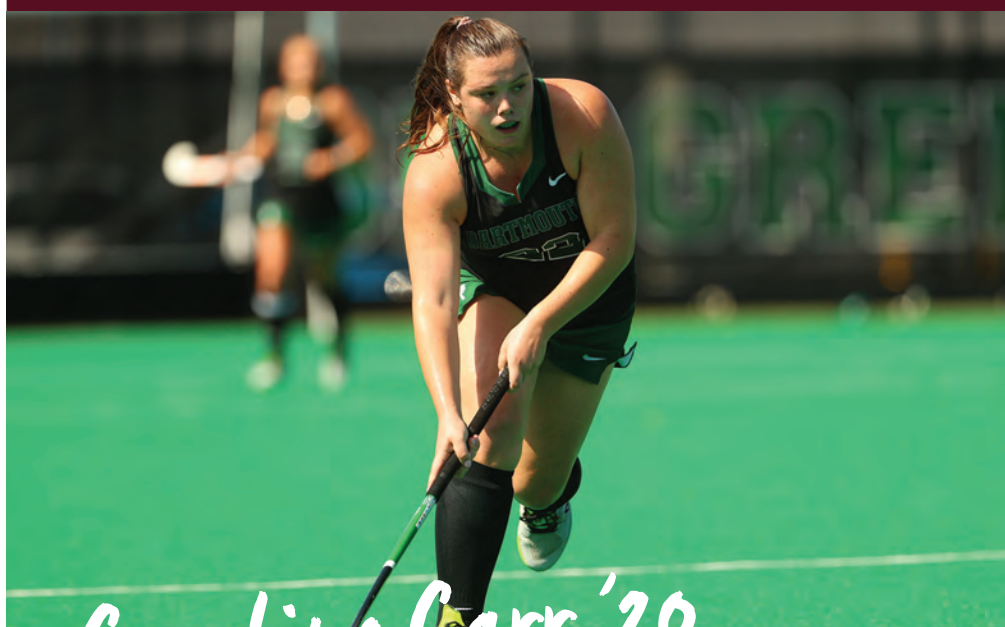
ADVICE FOR TODAY'S UPPER SCHOOL ATHLETES

"One piece of advice for those looking to compete at the next level would be to really believe in yourself and never quit learning," said Duchars. "You're going to meet people that have very different experiences than you, whatever you can learn from them, and their experience is only going to make you a better teammate and player as well. Really believe in yourself, especially if you make it to the next level; you're there for a reason. That's not to take it lightly or for granted but trust yourself, trust your ability."

"Keep working hard," advises Brecken. "The workload can get tiring at MICDS, but it really does prepare you well for your future. Use your teachers as a resource and get comfortable meeting with them. At college, if you want to meet with your professor, you have to be the one to reach out and schedule a meeting; your professor will not seek you out. Get comfortable with advocating for yourself."

"Never underestimate the amount teachers care about your success," said Oliver. "I still hear from old teachers when my team has a big win or I publish an update on LinkedIn. My teachers at MICDS truly shaped my experience and are a major part of the student and person I am today."

Wurdack said that students should "look at schools that you would not expect you would want to go to and visit them in person. I originally thought I did not want to go to a small NESCAC school, but I found that these are hidden gems, and I would have really missed out had I made an ignorant assumption about what this school would be like for me."



Caroline Carr '20, Dartmouth

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"Be coachable," said Carr. "Be open to feedback, whether it's in the classroom or on the field, because that is how you will learn and become better."

Reagan said, "MICDS is a special place. Be thankful you get to attend such an amazing school. Enjoy it and make the most of your experience. You will look back on it and realize how much you gained from being pushed so hard and challenged academically, athletically, and socially to keep growing."