

# Island Sports

## Emily Abbood on to Division I lacrosse career

By Adrienne Downing

Lacrosse is still in its fledgling stages in Rhode Island, but Jamestown resident Emily Abbood may help put it on the map.

The recent Moses Brown School graduate was recruited by such Division I powerhouses as Brown University, University of Connecticut, Harvard and Duke, but she knew that University of California at Berkley was where she was meant to be the second she stepped onto the campus.

"As soon as I got there and went on the tour, I knew I loved it. I called my mom at work right away to tell her," she said.

"I will never forget that call," her mom, Teresa, said. "She left on Thursday and called me on Friday and said 'I love it, this is where I want to be.' I asked her if she was sure it wasn't the glamour of it all and she said, 'no, this is it.'"

Academics, she said, also played a role in her choice. "I wanted a school that combined academics and sports. I didn't want it to be all about the sport," she said.

"We were impressed as parents that the team GPA was 3.4, because we did not want too much of one or the other; we wanted a nice balance. It was her choice, but it was a good decision," her dad, Michael, said.

Abbood started playing lacrosse a lot younger than most of the girls in the state.

"I started playing when I went to third grade at Moses Brown. I was introduced to it at recess," she said. "All of the boys had lacrosse sticks and some of the girls played. I went to Sports Authority and got a boy's stick and played with them. I loved it right from the start."

Although she felt an early connection to the sport, she did not take it up exclusively. Having been a soccer player from an early age, she continued to play all the way through high school.

"It was a tough decision, to concentrate on one sport in college. I could have played two sports at a Division III school, but I really wanted to play Division I," she said.

She also played ice hockey and came close to breaking the school record in the 300-meters in indoor track.

Lacrosse took center stage during the spring of her freshman year, when she made the lower New England tournament team.

"We played in a national tournament over Memorial Day weekend in Pennsylvania. Ever since then I



Emily Abbood

decided that lacrosse was the sport I wanted to play in college. I played in tournaments all summer and then joined a team in Connecticut called the Connecticut Futures," she said. "There was no other time after that to join a premiere soccer team or anything else."

At the time Abbood joined the Connecticut team, Rhode Island did not have an elite lacrosse team and she felt that the opportunities the team gave her helped set the stage for her success.

"The chances to play at the collegiate level are very slim and we always realized that. When you are playing locally, you can excel in a sport, but you never really know how you stack up against national talent because it is so competitive," Michael Abbood said. "I think once she joined the Connecticut team and started to travel to Maryland, New Jersey and Colorado, it really opened the door for her."

"It was an eye-opener. It was all kind of a dream until last year. I wanted to play and I was with 17 other girls who had the same

dream," Emily chimed in. "It doesn't actually become reality until you hear the coach say 'we want you to come here.' You just work hard and don't take anything for granted."

Her hard work at Moses Brown paid off with four first-team All-State selections, a scholar-athlete award and an Alumnae Award for her dedication, leadership, sportsmanship and significant impacts on the girls' athletic program.

The crowning moment came her senior year with an All-American selection from the U.S. Lacrosse Coaches Association, an achievement, which she humbly admits, was "pretty exciting."

"She just didn't want to call attention to it. I remember that I found out before she did and when I called her to tell her, she was at the mall," Teresa Abbood said. "She was buying a dress for something and I said, 'Emily, you just made All-American,' and she said, 'that's good, that's good, but what kind of shoes do you wear with a brown dress?'"

There is no need for her to proclaim her success, as her career numbers speak for themselves. She was the leading goal scorer for the Quakers, amassing 70 goals her senior year, and a total of 221 goals over four years at the mid-field position.

She will spend the rest of the summer readying herself for the

grueling five to six day-a-week practice schedule at Berkley.

"I already have a training package from them and I have been working with a trainer this summer on lifting and running to get ready for playing every day once I get there," she said. "Once I get there, there is no turning back. I will have a running test, a stick work test and we have to run a 6-minute mile."

Her biggest challenge, however, will come in her first game against Berkley rival, Stanford.

"People from Berkley don't even wear red to games against Stanford because it might start a riot and my best friend, Annie Read, is going to be the goalie for Stanford," Emily said. "I am sure we will probably laugh when we see each other on the field for the first time. She will block some of my shots and I will score some goals against her, but in the end it will all be fine."

As amazing as her lacrosse career has already been, Emily's parting words as she embarks on the future lacrosse adventure show where she believes her true success has come from.

"If it wasn't for these two," she said, pointing to her parents, "I would be nowhere. Ever since my freshman year they have driven me to tournaments and supported me no matter what. My brother, Tom, too. He comes to all of my games, even when it is boiling hot-the last place a 15-year-old boy wants to be, but he is there cheering me on."

Abbood is joining the Berkley team at a time when west coast universities are making major strides in their lacrosse programs.

"This is really exciting for me, to play with these girls at this level and to be part of taking this team to the next level," she concluded.

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