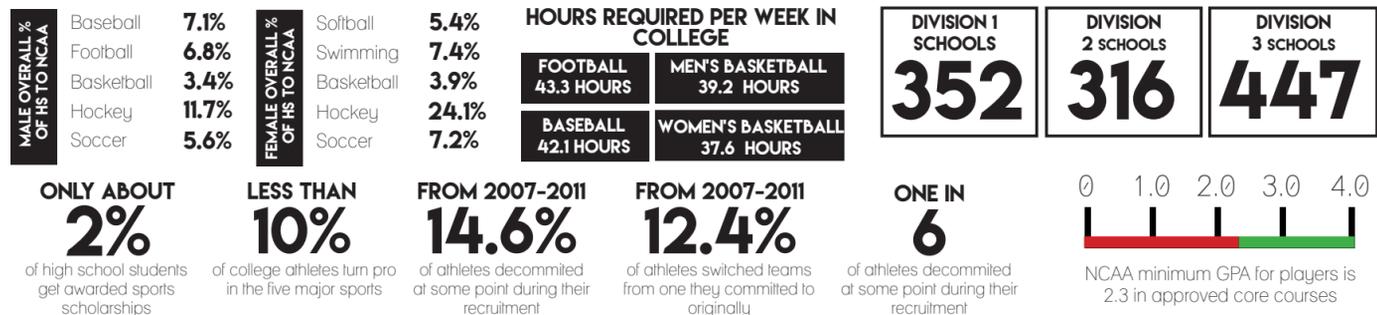


# SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS

MSD female athletes commit to colleges across the country

## JUST COMMIT



## SOCCER IN THE SWAMP



Senior Samantha Tobar has been playing soccer since she was 3 years old. Coach Roger Thomas of the Soccer Academy & Training decided to help Tobar learn the sport and even created a new age group so that Tobar could play. Thomas helped Tobar discover the thrill of soccer and recruited her to play with the boys team until age 13—an advantage Tobar believes played a vital role in her future as a soccer player. “[Boys’ soccer] is a lot quicker and way more physical. Girls’ soccer tries to shun away from skillful playing and focuses on just passing. I think that’s what makes me different from everyone else,” Tobar said. Tobar joined a girls team with Soccer

Academy & Training, until the age brackets dissolved; then she transferred to the Elite Club National League at Boca United, playing left and right midfielder. She played on the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School varsity soccer team until senior year when she joined the Academy at Boca United, a stricter, more rigorous travel league that specifically attracts the attention of college scouts. While playing with the Academy team, Tobar attended various showcases and competitions attracting dozens of college scouts seeking incoming freshman players. “I was lucky enough to have a good amount of schools looking at me, but once

I heard from UF, I knew that was the school I wanted to go to,” Tobar said. According to Tobar, her commitment to the University of Florida has now exceeded any of her prior achievements. “I want to be able to start as a freshman which is difficult to do, and that’s basically my goal: to see how much I can play,” Tobar said. Tobar remains undecided about a major, although she finds an interest in medicine for athletes. After college, Tobar primarily desires to go pro and play for the United States Women’s National Team or any professional club team that will have her. *Story by Suzanna Barna; Photo courtesy of Samantha Tobar*

## SOFTBALL SCHOLAR

Since she was 8 years old and playing for the Coral Springs Panthers, senior Allison Kerce has embodied the essence of leadership on and off the softball field. “[Softball] gave me the opportunity to develop my leadership [and] to decide what I wanted to do with my own life,” Kerce said. Continuing to develop her skills with the West Pine Diamond Dusters, based in Pembroke Pines, Kerce trained rigorously as a second basemen. Skilled in various positions, Kerce now plays as shortstop on the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School varsity softball team. Resulting from strenuous practices, Kerce has suffered numerous injuries.

This past summer, Kerce played a four-week travel softball season on two broken ankles in order to lead and support her teammates. “It was putting my team before me; I wanted their success more than I wanted my own,” Kerce said. Jeff Norman, Kerce’s former coach at the Diamond Dusters, aided her success as her greatest mentor, helping her and her teammates understand what level of dedication and drive is necessary to enter college softball. Norman’s influence was present when the team placed 15th for tied scores out of 53 teams at USA Gold 18U Nationals in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in July 2016. Besides Nationals in Oklahoma City,

Kerce sees her commitment to Cornell University as her greatest achievement in her career thus far. She is eager to help Cornell rebuild its softball program and set precedents for the future. Kerce also appreciates the quality of education that Cornell will provide for her, allowing her to continue soaring academically in addition to athletically. Kerce aims to become an NCAA All-American for both academics and athletics by the end of her four years at Cornell. Following college, Kerce hopes to use her economics major and minors in statistics, accounting and finance from Cornell to own a major league baseball team. *Story by Suzanna Barna; Photo courtesy of Allison Kerce*



## COMMIT TO THE MITT

Senior Jaelyn McKenna crosses the country each summer and fall in pursuit of one thing: softball. Beginning at 7 years old, McKenna immersed herself in the sport. She eventually joined the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School varsity softball team as a left fielder and catcher in addition to her role as a catcher in the travel organization, New Jersey Intensity. McKenna plays with the New Jersey Intensity for tournaments, travelling across the country nearly every week in the summer and fall. Unfortunately,

the distance prevents McKenna from practicing with the team. Instead, she practices and conditions on her own while also playing for MSD. Due to the constant physical demands, McKenna suffers from worn down ligaments and joints. She admits, though, that it is worth the pain. “It’s just school and softball; it’s all I do,” McKenna said. The team’s most anticipated tournament of the year is the Premier Girls Fastpitch Nationals in Huntington Beach, California. After placing in the top 15 last year, McKenna plans on attending

the PGF Nationals for the fourth and final time this year. Her hard work and success in the travel league attracted the attention of Mississippi State University, and she committed to the university soon after. At MSU, McKenna aims to continue improving her skills and to win the Division I NCAA Women’s College World Series. She also plans on entering the sports management industry, unless her dream of getting drafted into the National Pro Fastpitch, the professional softball league, comes true. *Story by Suzanna Barna; courtesy of Jaelyn McKenna*



## TUMBLING FOR TUITION

Senior Alexandra Greenwald receives scholarship to University of Iowa for gymnastics



Alexandra Greenwald is a level 10 gymnast who competes for American Twisters Gymnastics. Since she was 3 years old, Greenwald has committed blood, sweat and tears to gymnastics, practicing for four and a half hours six days a week. Greenwald dedicates her long term success to her supportive mother. “I could dedicate my success to my mom because she is always encouraging me and helps me get through my frustration in order to become a better

gymnast,” Greenwald said. Greenwald competed at the Junior Olympic National Championships in Indianapolis, Indiana in May 2017. She entered in all four events: vault, bars, beam and floor. Greenwald placed fourth on bars and eighth overall. After interest from multiple coaches, Greenwald toured various colleges. When she visited the University of Iowa, though, Greenwald had found her dream university. “I instantly felt at home. The coaches

and girls on the team were so welcoming, and the training facility was one of the best in the country,” Greenwald said. Earning a full athletic scholarship to the University of Iowa, Greenwald looks forward to helping the Hawkeyes at Nationals. Greenwald also aims to be an All-American gymnast, placing in the top four in any event at the NCAA national championship. In college, Greenwald plans on studying medicine to become a pediatric oncologist. *Story by Suzanna Barna; Photo courtesy of Alexandra Greenwald*

## WOLK AT WESLEYAN

Playing for over 10 years, senior Abby Wolk dedicates about eight hours each week to training as a goalkeeper in lacrosse. From kindergarten to now, Wolk cherished her time playing on lacrosse teams, such as LaxManiax, Stealth and the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School varsity lacrosse team. Traveling across the whole country with LaxManiax, Wolk has formed unbreakable bonds with her long time teammates who live throughout Florida. “I have grown up with a bunch of my teammates and they really have become my best friends. At every practice and

game they push me to work my hardest and be my best,” Wolk said. Wolk began her journey to her commitment when she attended Elite 180 Lacrosse Camp in Keene, New Hampshire during the summer of 2016. Here, the future Wesleyan coach was simply a training coach for the camp. Taking interest in Wolk, the coach remained in contact with her about upcoming tournaments and her life as a high school student. Wolk admired the university’s priority of being a student before an athlete in preparation for the world after college. When the first date for colleges to offer

commitments in the New England Small College Athletic Conference came, July 1, the coach officially offered Wolk a spot on the team which she graciously accepted. Valuing academics, Wolk wants to major in physics or computer science at Wesleyan. The college was nominated for a bid for the NCAA tournament in 2017, but did not win. In the future, Wolk aspires to help the team move further in the NCAA tournament, hoping to win it all during her years with Wesleyan. *Story by Suzanna Barna; Photo courtesy of Abby Wolk*



## LEVELING UP IN LACROSSE

Senior Emily Mox commits to playing lacrosse at Slippery Rock University



Emily Mox may have a love for lacrosse today, but in her childhood, she participated in two sports: soccer and lacrosse. As she matured, Mox realized she had to choose between the sports. “When I started middle school, I made a decision that I needed to pick one sport and stick with that sport, so [since] I loved lacrosse, I stayed with lacrosse,” Mox said. She plays for Stealth, a travel lacrosse team in Parkland, and Marjory Stoneman Douglas Women’s varsity lacrosse. Mox commits about seven hours each week to training as a midfielder and practicing the

draw, the starting play where two players battle for the lacrosse ball. Mox, set on living out of state, attended a training camp in December 2016 at Slippery Rock University in Borough County, Pennsylvania, where the coaches expressed strong interest in her skills. Coincidentally, the Slippery Rock coaches told Mox that they would be attending the ESPN President’s Cup in Orlando, a tournament Mox was already scheduled to play in. Impressed by her performance in the tournament, the coaches confirmed Mox’s spot on the team

with an academic and athletic scholarship. On April 15, 2017, Mox officially committed to SRU. SRU of Pennsylvania ranks high in the NCAA Division II standings and has a serene smaller campus feeling, which Mox is excited to be a part of. After her official visit, spending time and practicing with the team, Mox looks forward to beginning her college career. Since no professional lacrosse league exists, Mox plans on studying medicine in college to become a physical therapist. *Story by Suzanna Barna; Photo courtesy of Emily Mox*