



FIELD HOCKEY Q&A WITH THE SENIOR CLASS



(L-R): Maddie DeCerbo, Jenny Johnstone, Jess Orrett, Kelsey LeBlanc

The Virginia field hockey team moved up to No. 3 in the NFCA poll last week, the highest ranking for the program since the beginning of the 2011 season. The Cavaliers' four senior captains, goalkeeper Jenny Johnstone, defensive midfielders Kelsey LeBlanc and Jess Orrett and center back Maddie DeCerbo, shared their thoughts on what has made this season a success for the Hoos as well as explaining the sport of field hockey to the novice fan.

Gameday Magazine: How would you explain field hockey to someone who isn't that familiar with it?

Jenny Johnstone: When I describe field hockey to people, I say that it is very much like soccer. There are 11 players on the field at once and one goalkeeper. There are some differences, like you can only shoot inside the circle.

Kelsey LeBlanc: It is similar, but in field hockey you can try to win fouls. You can dribble the ball and intentionally put it in someone's foot to try to get more space, whereas in soccer you can't do that. I think that bit of strategy is a main difference that I noticed when I was switching between soccer and field hockey.

Maddie DeCerbo: Field hockey is really fast paced because the ball is smaller and the turf is a fast surface, so the passing is a lot quicker, but there is also some stopping because of fouls. You can't hit your foot, that's a foul. And there's obstruction and other things. I think that people get confused when they watch their first game and it's all the whistles and fouls.

JJ: Now the game is changing a lot. There are new rules, so it doesn't stop as much and you can take the ball yourself on a free hit instead of waiting for someone else to move, so it goes faster.

Gameday Magazine: What's the thing you like most about field hockey?

Jess Orrett: I like it because it's really fast and you can improve. You can keep improving because you can never know everything about playing the sport.

JJ: I love the speed of it. I love how fast it is. It can change so quickly. You can be three goals down and then up a goal.

KL: I think there's a lot of ways you can stand out in field hockey. You can be a great ball handler, a great distributor, a great defender, a great shooter or a great goalkeeper. There's a lot of great skills to learn and skills to perfect, and ways to channel your athleticism and stand out in different ways.

Gameday Magazine: What makes Jenny a good goalkeeper?

MD: Jenny is goofy and can be very scary, but not to me. Other people are definitely scared of her, though. She is very smart in the cage and has lots of experience. She's also very vocal. She's quick and makes some ridiculous saves that really help us out and she's not afraid to call people out. She keeps everyone in line, so she can avoid having to make dramatic saves by lining everyone up and making sure they're in the right spot.

Gameday Magazine: What makes Maddie a solid defender?

JJ: Maddie is a good defender because she listens to what I say. Being serious now, Maddie is a good defender because she, positionally, is very aware of where she needs to be and what she's supposed to be doing, and telling other people what they're meant to do as well. Especially, with some freshmen in the backfield as well it is up to her to make sure everyone is in the right position at the right time so that we can stop any potential goals from scoring. We do that as a team.

Gameday Magazine: Jess and Kelsey, you two actually play the same position and switch in for one another. Tell us about how the other plays defensive mid.

JO: Kelsey is very composed on the ball and never panics. She has really tight stick skills and manages to work her way out of tough situations. She has really good eyes so she can make some really good passes, too.

KL: I really like playing with Jess. I think she's very defensive-minded in that she's not going to go run up the field and be out of position and try to attack on the end line. She's good as a defenseman and she plays very simple, so she'll 'get it and give it,' which is good because we need playmakers in the

midfield. Once we are in the attack 25, if we get her the ball, she has one of the most powerful sweeps I have ever witnessed.

Gameday Magazine: What has been a great moment for you off the field with this team?

JJ: I always enjoy doing Habitat for Humanity with the team. I think that's a great bonding experience when we go and we help build houses, and I think it's great to get to know your teammates off the field in different situations as well as on the field.

MD: I think some of the bus rides are some of the best memories over the past four years. You're stuck together on this little bus for hours and you bond with people and joke and we do karaoke. There were so many karaoke performances that were extremely funny.

Gameday Magazine: What are some great on-field memories?

JJ: Our second year (2012) when we beat Maryland in regular season.

KL: It was epic. It was a Friday night game and it was raining and dark, we were the underdog. I wasn't even playing in that game. I was injured and I was sitting on the bench, I was on the edge of my seat the whole game and then it ended and I probably started crying.

MD: I remember there were a few minutes left and I looked at Jenny in the back and we were like "AHH," and I remember so vividly looking around

and being so excited that we were going to win that game. It was regular season and it wasn't a tournament, but it was still the best feeling I've had.

JO: Honestly, for me, beating Duke at Duke this season was one of the best feelings. In the Maryland game, it was a big win, but I didn't feel like I hardly did anything in that game. The Duke win was so perfect because everyone is important this year and everyone actually had a role in winning that game.

Gameday Magazine: What are your goals for the rest of the season?

MD: Making sure we aren't peaking too early. I feel very confident going out on the field with everyone. It's just a really good vibe and I see us going to the Final Four. Even second years are saying it and they have so much time left, but they want to do it this year, which is so great to hear because this is our last year and we want them to want it as much as we do.

JJ: We definitely want to end on a high note. I want to go out with a bang and leave something with our names on it, so people remember the program that we helped build.

MD: Even if we don't make it as far as we want to, we want to end on a good note. Last year, for instance, we lost in the first round and it was totally unexpected and it was kind of an awful way to end the season. Even if we don't go as far as we like to, it would still be awesome to end just feeling awesome about the season and the four years.

Maddie DeCerbo



Jenny Johnstone



Jess Orrett



Kelsey LeBlanc

