



2023
Lysle “Spike” Garnish
Scholar-Athlete
Awards

Saturday, September 9, 2023

The 2023 Garnish Scholar-Athlete Awards

From the Director's Chair: George VanderZwaag Executive Director of Athletics

Today we recognize 10 of our senior students as Garnish Scholars. The Garnish Program was created in honor of Lysle "Spike" Garnish, coach and mentor to many Rochester students from 1930 to 1948. He became a trainer and assistant basketball coach in 1931. He was named an assistant baseball coach in 1932. Spike was an assistant football coach from 1945-48.

The Friends of Rochester Athletics, through an alumni committee, reviews nominations of students from our varsity teams who have achieved at a high level in both their athletic and academic pursuits through their junior year. From these nominees, a small number are selected as Garnish Scholars.

Periodically, the Garnish Memorial Citation is given to a graduate, faculty member, or a staff member for dedication and contributions to the intercollegiate athletic program.

These students represent the ideal of the scholar-athlete. They lead our teams on the field of play, while doing outstanding work in the classroom. I am continually inspired by what our students are able to achieve when given the opportunities at a great institution like Rochester. What we know about the students that we recruit is that they set high goals for themselves inside and outside the classroom. What we learn from our Garnish Scholars, and reaffirm today, is that Rochester students are able to demonstrate educational excellence through an outstanding combination of athletic and academic achievement.

The Garnish Committee is proud to present to you these exemplary University of Rochester undergraduates and the Friends of Rochester Athletics continues to remind us of the values of this institution through the Garnish Program.



Top (L-R): 2022 Garnish honorees: Exec. Dir. of Athletics George VanderZwaag, Dean Joan Saab, Nick Annechino, Susan Bansbach, Jose Corredor Alvarez, Hannah Keiper, Hannah Lindemuth, Amanda Newell, Abdelrahman Lasheen, Garnish Citation Winner Dennis O'Donnell

Bottom (L-R): Associate Director of Athletics Terry Gurnett, Scott Sikorski, Tejan Borchers, Rachel Dennis, Associate Director of Athletics Kris Shanley.



Abby Gress

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

HOMETOWN: St. James, NY **MAJOR:** Political Science and Language, Media & Comm.

With your majors, is a career in the law in your future?

Yes! I am a double major in political science and language, media, and communications. I also have a minor in Spanish! After I get my masters, I will be attending law school.

Where did that interest develop?

I am not sure where it stemmed from. However, I have always been more drawn to history classes and been more interested in learning about government. I have always wanted to make an impact with my degrees to help other people. In time I realized that law, history, and government have become a passion and an outlet I feel I can help others best in my career.

How did you earn your internship in the Queens County District Attorney's office?

The program is very competitive, immersive, and well known for teaching students how to become Assistant District Attorneys all over the New York area. I applied and expressed a desire to learn and experience life as an ADA and after two rounds of interviews and background checks, I was offered a position!

What sort of tasks did you perform in the D.A.'s office? This is not what you see on popular television programs, is it?

That was definitely a question I got a lot while being there. Honestly, the similarities to the TV programs are: the exciting popular cases, the trips to crime scenes, uncovering evidence, trial work like interviewing, preparing and so much more. That is what makes the job exciting and rewarding. The difference is it takes a long time to prepare and work, countless hours of overtime, and paperwork. While I was there, I performed a lot of tasks because they wanted me to have a lot of experience. I aided and observed in extraditions of prisoners, assisted in processing the retrieval paperwork of a defendant's property when cases were disposed of, observed Criminal Court proceedings and trials and discussed legal and case analysis with Assistant District Attorneys (Including highly publicized trials), participated in weekly lectures discussing advancements in Criminal Law and prosecuting different types of cases all given by each Bureau's Chief and finally I participated in the Queens District Attorney's Mock Trial Competition. While I was there, I made lifelong friends in such a short time and I am very grateful for my experience and to go visit.

You have found ways to contribute in different areas. Two years ago, you had dominating games on the backboards in the UAA and last year, in the Chuck Resler title game. Your scoring skill helped UR win the Mark's Pizzeria Crosstown Shootout During practice, will the coaches tell you they need you to rebound more, or hit the outside shot, play down in the post, etc.?

My coaches are always trying to make me better and expand on my abilities. Being a versatile player, I love feedback on how I can contribute to the best of my abilities in all positions, and both ends of the court. They hold me accountable when I do not do the things necessary for us to succeed, like boxing out, closing out, a bad pass, etc. It only makes me better, which as a whole, makes our team better. There are days where I am a post for practice and there are days where I am a guard but most days, I do both and stay on for extra reps. They give me feedback on how I can use my skills and abilities to my advantage in these positions.



You were involved with the UR Ripple Match Leadership Development. What did that involve?

It was a very fun experience where I got to introduce other students to the platform so they can find jobs, internships, or research opportunities. I had to do a lot of marketing and talking to students. I even helped one of my teammates get an internship over the summer and possibly a job!

As a Vice-President for marketing for the UR Women's Network, what do you do?

I create design and publish at least three Instagram Feed posts and 2 Instagram

Story posts per week, I design promotional materials (e.g., flyers/posters, merchandise, etc.), I manage and lead the chapter's Marketing Committee, I attend all Executive Board meetings, chapter meetings/events, and national events, and I am responsible for the overall growth and success of the TWN chapter here at Rochester.

I have met a lot of amazing and smart women in our school and in the workforce.

Which courses are you looking forward to in the fall semester?

This fall semester I am very much looking forward to all of them but mostly Exitos de taquilla: Blockbuster Films from Spain and Spanish America. I haven't taken Spanish in a semester, and I love learning about new cultures and seeing new film styles. It will definitely be very interesting and fun!

What plans do you have for next year?

Next year I intend to play basketball and get my masters! I will be applying to Rochester but also other schools! I am still unsure but I know I will definitely be pursuing my athletic and academic career prior to law school.

Mara Heppard

FIELD HOCKEY

HOMETOWN: Rochester, NY **MAJOR:** Digital Media Studies and Business

You have worked with the University Communications office, the Athletic Communications office, the St. Sebastian Society, and the social media chores of the field hockey team itself. Do you get any sleep?

Haha- yes! I am definitely ready to sleep when the day is over. But let's not talk about how much coffee I drink...

Let's talk about these activities. What were some of the video projects you did for Instagram and TikTok for the Communications page? Did you develop the topics or were they assigned? Did you shoot all the video and then edit it down?

I have been student-interning with the University Communications team for over two years now and it's been an amazing experience. As a videographer, I am part of a team that works on various video projects that showcase undergraduate student life across University social media platforms. I am incredibly grateful to work with such great people and to also have the opportunity to direct some of my own projects. Depending on the concept, I will shoot video and take charge in post-production, but there are no set roles since we have the team to help out.

What sort of feedback did you receive for your work?

We have had content go viral, but our content is focused on developing branding and marketing for the University. I really enjoy the work environment- my bosses will assign me projects but also always leave room for any ideas I might have. On a project, I will storyboard ideas and then we use our weekly meetings as a brainstorming space. There we will exchange feedback and then later in the post-production/publishing process we have the opportunity to receive feedback from other University departments.

You also work for Athletic Communications in the game operations role. This means possibly keeping the game clock, a shot clock (basketball), a manual scorebook or scoresheet, and helping spot statistics for the computer inputters. How many different sports have you covered in this job?

I've covered almost all sports that Rochester plays at the varsity level. I really enjoy my time working with Game Staff since it's really just a way for me to deepen my involvement with the UR athletic community. I love working the games to watch and support UR, but also to enjoy working with my student coworkers and our bosses in athletics (Shoutout Scott Sabocheck, Ari Ross, and Dennis O'Donnell!). It's a really amazing and fun environment that I'll miss.

You are also a captain for the St Sebastian Society. What are your chief responsibilities?

The St. Sebastian Society is a varsity club through the Catholic Newman Center which I've been involved with as a part of the field hockey team for the past 3 years. We fundraise for the Boys & Girls Club of Rochester as well as coordinate spiritual activities for students on campus. At the UR Catholic Newman Center, I've also been a part of the leadership team for the annual Kairos retreat.

In addition to posting on the field hockey team pages in social media, you created a 10-page social media style guide for the team. Was that difficult?

For nearly two years, I have been mainly running and designing content for our Rochester Field Hockey Instagram account. For our fans, our Instagram is a very intuitive and accessible way for them to stay up to date about our team, especially during our season. I am passionate about graphic design and hope to go into brand marketing, so I'm really lucky to be able to do it for our team! Used heavily in branding, style guides help a brand adhere to their mission and culture. Adapting to brand guidelines and maintaining voice are skills that are covered in my curriculum with Digital Media Studies (DMS) and Marketing, so it was actually great that I could put these into application for our team. Our account is @rochesterfieldhockey on Instagram, you should check it out!

Where will we find you on the field hockey pitch?

On the field, I am a midfielder. But really, the answer is wherever my coach, Wendy Andreatta, tells me to go. (I have played a little forward here and there and in high school I was a defender). It really has been a privilege to be a part of Rochester Field Hockey. Besides the sport, I



am so grateful to be on a team of people just as passionate (if not more!) about athletics and leadership. I believe our successful team culture is really a reflection of Wendy and her inspiring ability as a coach. The support of our field hockey families and alumni is also just as incredible. The full team experience is amazing!

If a friend came to the game (and had never seen the sport before), how can they tell that you (and the team) are playing well?

At the college level it'll be all about the passing. If it looks like a teammate is passing to a teammate that you didn't even realize existed until you saw them receive the pass- that to me is the indicator to success. Passing is how you can seamlessly move the ball up the field to the attacking circle, and this doesn't always mean your passing up, you can pass back to a deep defender and take the ball up the other side. Smart, effective, and timed passing is the key to maintaining possession. This is also why it's important to know your teammates so you can anticipate where they will be on the field.

How does business tie into this as well as your minor in philosophy?

In business I have taken a curriculum that is focused in marketing. This opportunity has allowed me to build a skillset in branding and PR/Advertising. With the philosophy department, I took courses that pertained to building sound and valid arguments, as well as developing logical methods of thinking. My philosophy minor has complimented my ability to accurately present information and reasoning in my typed work.

You have been honored by the National Field Hockey Coaches Association with its National Academic Squad award for three years and as a Scholar of Distinction for the last two years. With everything on your plate, how do you balance it all?

With faith, the support of my family, my friends, my team, my coaches, my hometown community, and the UR Community. We can all do it! I am grateful to have been a leader, teammate, and friend to those around me, but really it's all just learned from those around me. I can never be thankful enough to my parents who have supported me throughout every opportunity. At UR, I am very grateful to be a part of the amazing athletics community, and a special thank you to Wendy Andreatta and my team for inspiring me to keep pushing for the program's success.

Kate Isaac

TRACK & FIELD

HOMETOWN: Fairport, NY MAJOR: Biomedical Engineering

You became a national champion and Division III record-holder in March when UR's 4x400 relay team won the NCAA Division III National Championship indoors. Let's talk about that a little bit. You ran the second leg. As Madeline O'Connell came down the home stretch to pass the baton, what were you thinking about?

I remember just trying to tune everything else out and focus on the upcoming handoff. I remember feeling really excited and confident to run, but also incredibly nervous for the exchange of the baton. That final was the most intense race I have ever run, and it was obviously incredibly stressful waiting for her to get to me because passing the baton safely was something I was worried about going into what we hoped would be a close race. I guess my main thought at that moment was just to make sure that the baton exchange went as smoothly as possible.

And how was it when teammate and anchor runner Susan Bansbach crossed the finish line in first place?

We were so excited when Susan crossed the line first, it was so nerve-wracking watching the last lap of her leg because we knew that we were racing strong competitors and that it would be a very close race. It was amazing watching her win the heat because I knew that all of us had left everything we had on the track and it was just such a rewarding feeling. Going into the race I knew that we had just as good a chance as anyone in our heat, but it was amazing to feel the relief of knowing that we took care of business.

The final placings wouldn't be determined until the second heat completed. Were there plenty of nerves on the sideline when the second heat was going?

I honestly think that it didn't sink in to me that we could win the whole thing until the second heat was about halfway through. I was just so proud that we had done all we could to win our heat, and I knew that there was nothing that we could do to control what happened in the second heat. The second heat seemed to go on forever as we watched each split appear on the board, and we were all standing together just holding our breath as we waited for the final times to show up.

When they presented all four of you with the national championship trophy on the podium, how did it feel?

The aftermath of winning was just amazing. Being on the podium with amazing friends and watching all of our hard work come together in a way that I never could have imagined was so rewarding. Getting to share that moment with them was so special.

The outdoor 4x400 finished second in the nation. It seemed like every week – indoors or outdoors – the team broke its own record for the time. How were you able to continually surpass the record?

I would say that being able to continually break the record came down to simply being dedicated to the sport. We were given a lot of opportunities to race against really good competition which definitely helped us push our limits throughout the season. Also, being able to train with such a successful and motivated group of people definitely helped push me to become the best I could be. I know that each week we were happy and proud of our performances, but I also think that each of us knew there really wasn't a limit to what we could achieve.

You are a two-time All-American and a seven time conference champion. You are on the all-time UR Top-10 lists in 10 sprint and relay events. What do the coaches concentrate on when it comes to speed as opposed to tactics?

I think that the most important thing for me when it comes to building speed is repetition. I can give an example of working on block starts, where we do around 5-6 really good quality reps with critiques after each one. After a while of receiving the same cues from my coach about what to improve, I can focus on improving those in practice so that it becomes natural and I don't even have to consciously think about those things during races. With regards to tactics, I've found that the best piece of advice for me as a sprinter was just one word I got from my coach before a Liberty League finals race: "blinders". The strategy I try to go into most races with is to put my blinders on and to just focus on my own race. I've found the most success when I focus only on the thing in the



race that I can control, which is my performance.

Three members of the relay were named Academic All-Americans by the College Sports Communicators (formerly CoSIDA). You are also a member of the University's senior honor society and the engineering honor society. Where do you work in time to study in addition to track practice and the meets which typically run from mid-January to mid- or late-May?

It's definitely a challenge to balance athletics and academics, but I also think that being a part of the track team has really helped me with managing my time. Since time between classes and practice is limited I know that it's important to use my time wisely. I'm very lucky to be a part of a team that values academics so much because my teammates definitely make it easier (and more fun) to get work done.

You worked as a research assistant at the Haber Lab in the UR Medical Center. Where is the lab's focus and what did you do?

Working at the Haber Lab last summer was a great experience. The lab has a broad focus in working to understand some of the neural circuitry that is involved in motivation, reward, and motor control, and specifically what kinds of diseases and mental health disorders can occur when this circuitry is not working properly. I was involved in a project investigating the development of myelin, which is essential for the communication between neurons. I was working to divide brain scan images into cortical regions to see how myelin development differed between these regions, and I was also working on preparing the images for the following phases of the project in Photoshop.

Which classes are you looking forward to this semester?

This semester I'm most looking forward to taking BME 492: Neuroenhancement and Rehabilitation Engineering. My interests lie where biomedical engineering and neuroscience intersect in order to solve the problems that arise when something goes wrong in the nervous system. This class focuses on the field of neuroengineering, and I'm really excited to learn more about medical devices/neuroprosthetics that can be used to treat different neurological conditions.

What's ahead for next year?

I am so excited thinking about all of the wonderful things that URTF has in store for this upcoming year. We have an amazing group which has collectively shared in a lot of success over the last few years, and I know that we will continue to motivate each other to find new levels of success. I'm really looking forward to building on the positive momentum that we established last year.

Madeleine LaChance

ROWING

HOMETOWN: Belchertown, MA **MAJOR:** Optical Engineering and Classics

Your dad rowed for the University's men's team as an undergraduate (UR Class of '96). Did he spark your interest in rowing?

My dad definitely played a part in my decision to start rowing. He has a rowing shell, and when I was growing up, he taught me the basics of how to row and would occasionally let me row it. He grew up on Lake Champlain, so it was really important to him that my siblings and I learned to swim and love the water from an early age. As such, my siblings and I spent most of our summers in various boats or swimming in lakes, and when I got to Rochester and saw that there was a learn to row program, I thought it would be a great opportunity to learn how to row in a more structured and disciplined environment.

In the last two years, the 1st Varsity 8 has done very well – won the Head of the Genesee (twice), finished as the top Division III boat at the Head of the Schuylkill in Philadelphia (twice), and finished strongly at the Head of the Charles (in Boston). What's the environment at major races like those?

Those regattas are always really fun because so many different schools and clubs compete at them, and with all the spectators along the shore, it's almost like a party. The Head of the Charles in particular was an event like none I had ever experienced before. There were quite literally thousands of people there, and competitors included members of national teams and Olympians. It was a really incredible experience. The regattas are also a great bonding experience for the team. We usually have a spot along the shore so we can watch the races and cheer our teammates on from the shore.

Have you been in one specific seat in the boat constantly, or have you filled in different spots based on the race?

In regard to the eight, I have raced in bow seat most often. I was bow seat in every race but one from sophomore fall to the start of junior spring, then my coach switched me to 7 seat at the end of our spring training trip in Miami this past season, and I remained there for the rest of the season. Small changes in a boat's lineup can make a big difference in its speed, so while coaches are constantly trying to find the fastest lineup, it's common for rowers to have a seat that they prefer or that they row really well in. Each seat is important in its own way, and it was interesting getting to know the quirks of different seats and feel the differences in the boat when I'm in one seat versus another.

You have acquired a number of academic awards, among them the Suzanne O'Brien Phi Beta Kappa Book Award as a sophomore and the Provost's Circle as a junior. Since rowing competes in the fall and the spring, how challenging is it to balance your athletics, your academics, and other extra-curricular activities?

It's definitely challenging to manage everything. I always have a really heavy course load, and it can be hard to balance homework, practice, rehearsals, club meetings, and work shifts. However, they're all things that I enjoy, even the schoolwork, so it often doesn't feel like work. I like being busy, and with a little time management and self-discipline, it's manageable.

How long have you been a part of the Ballet Performance Group on campus? Did you take part in ballet at The MacDuffie School?

I have been a part of the Ballet Performance Group since my freshman fall. I think it was the first club I joined at U of R. I knew about it even before coming to the U of R because my mom danced in it when she was an undergraduate student at the U of R and was even its president for a couple years. She put me in ballet classes when I was six, and I fell in love with ballet and continued taking classes regularly until I graduated high school. MacDuffie didn't have a lot of ballet. They had modern classes, which I took, and I also took a choreography class my senior year, but most of my training took place at Massachusetts Academy of Ballet and Amherst Ballet Theatre Company. I still remember getting my first pair of pointe shoes for my eleventh birthday, and I got to dance in many ballets, including The Nutcracker, Swan Lake, and Sleeping Beauty. I ended up stepping away from ballet a little when I entered college, and I miss it a lot, but I love being a part of BPG and am glad that I can continue to dance, even if I dance a lot less than I used to.

Does any of your training for ballet help with your preparation for rowing? Does rowing help you with ballet?

I think my ballet training helped me to become very aware of my body and



how to control it, which has definitely helped with rowing. Because of my ballet training, I am able to watch someone perform a movement, whether it is a complex ballet step or a rowing stroke, and replicate it almost exactly. I can also tell when and why something looks or feels wrong and quickly figure out how to fix it. The ways in which rowing has helped me with ballet are more subtle, probably because I'm simply not dancing as much anymore, but I think the strength I have gained from rowing has helped my dancing, specifically the core strength. I think doing both rowing and ballet at the same time has helped me to work on both my strength and my flexibility, which are both very important physical qualities.

You carry a double major of Optical Engineering and Classics. Have you done an internship with either specification?

I haven't done a Classics internship, but I was an optical engineering intern at Lockheed Martin Space in Denver, Colorado this summer, and it was an absolutely incredible experience. I learned so much and was able to work on some really cool projects and meet some amazing, smart people. The environment was very different from the classroom, but it was different in a good way, and I think I would enjoy working full time at a place like Lockheed.

Which works of literature do the Classics study?

I study Latin and ancient Greek, so I have read a wide variety of Roman and Greek authors, including Vergil, Caesar, Tacitus, Sophocles, Plato, and Herodotus. I think my favorite Latin work that I have read so far is the Aeneid, and my favorite Greek work is the Antigone. They were both so beautiful and so much more powerful in the original language than they are in English. It's kind of incredible to read something that was written thousands of years ago and still speaks to people today.

Are there classes you are really looking forward to in this semester?

I'm looking forward to senior design and to getting to work on a project with no answer key that has applications in the real world. I'm also really looking forward to the optical coatings class and Cicero class that I'll be taking this semester. I'm almost done with the required classes for both my majors, so most of the classes I will be taking this year are classes that I have chosen simply because they look really interesting.

Where will you be next year?

Well, that's a tough question to answer. I am planning on getting my master's at U of R next year, also in optical engineering, so hopefully, next year, I'll still be in Rochester taking graduate classes and working towards my master's. I was admitted to the GEAR program when I applied to U of R, so I have automatic admission to the graduate school and should graduate with my master's after only a year. There's still so much I want to learn, and from what I have heard speaking to others who are further along in their career than I am, having a master's degree should set me up well to start my career as an optical engineer in industry. Who knows what will actually happen (Mann tracht, un Gott lacht), but as of now, that is the plan.

Santino Lupica-Tondo

MEN'S SOCCER

HOMETOWN: **Weston, FL** MAJOR: **Mechanical Engineering**

Defense has always been a strong point at Rochester. The last two years are good examples of that: you have 13 shutouts in those two seasons and have allowed less than a goal a game. What makes everything click for the defense to shine?

Well first thing I want to do is shout out my backline from last year and the year before that. They have been amazing. Besides the quality they bring on the field, it is honestly the off the field stuff that makes everything click. We see each other basically every day and are constantly getting lunch and always hanging out. And that just builds a connection that translates to the field making every one of us play for each other. We all have a common mindset and we will try doing whatever it takes to keep that ball out of our net.

You have played every minute of every game in two years – more than 2,900 minutes in all. That's over 48 hours prowling that goal line. How do you keep your fitness level up?

Well luckily as a goalkeeper I do not have to run much which is nice. It is much more of a mental game so I need to make sure my head is in the right place. I like to do yoga or stretch a couple of times a week to relax my mind and stay agile.

An opposing coach said one time "...shot stoppers are a dime a dozen. A goalkeeper rules his penalty area...". How do you command the area?

I would say commanding my area is one of my strengths. I command my area with confidence and aggression ready to come out and claim any ball that goes into my box. Communication is key when commanding your area so I am constantly talking with my backline just making sure they know where to be and where I will be.

What is the toughest challenge playing in goal?

I would say that the toughest challenge is staying focused all 90 minutes. As a goalkeeper any mistake is costly since the only thing behind you is the net, you are the last line of defense. So losing focus for one second could cost your team the game. It's a lot of pressure but that is the beauty of it.

The team visited Germany over the summer and attended a Bundesliga match at Hamburg SV. Did you concentrate on watching how the two goalies were playing, regardless of which team they played for? Did you notice anything specifically?

Going to the game was an amazing experience. Of course I spent the entire game analyzing both goalkeepers. I even watched their warm up. I noticed how differently each keeper played the game. The Hamburg keeper played very high up the field and used his feet to build out of the back a lot, he was playing the modern goalkeeper role. While the other keeper stayed in his box for most of the game and played the traditional keeper role.

What are your responsibilities as a member of the team's Leadership Committee?

Being part of the leadership committee means people on the team look up to you therefore leading by example is a big responsibility. Also being the voice for your team is another responsibility.

Your last two opening day opponents have come against SUNY Cortland, one of UR's traditional rivals. You posted two shutouts: 1-0 in 2021 at the Prince Athletic Complex, 3-0 at Cortland in 2022. Does anything stick out about either of those matches?

The first game of the season is always special. There's always a little bit of extra adrenaline and motivation, especially when it is a home opener. The whole team knows how important it is to start on a high note. So like every other game we try our hardest to give it all we got.



As a Mechanical Engineering major, you have a Senior Review Project this year. Can you tell us what that project will be?

We actually don't know our senior design project choice until the end of the fall semester.

Which classes intrigue you the most for the fall semester?

I am very excited for my mechanical design class. It is the first half of senior design so I'm interested to see what we learn and what challenges I will have to overcome. We also get to choose our senior design topic in this class which is exciting.

You worked as a design intern at Perma Steel. What were your responsibilities?

I worked within the 2D design team using AutoCAD/BricsCAD. I learned how to read and interpret 2D fabrications drawings of curtain walls, and translate them into 3D.

When you were home in Weston FL, did you play with any travel teams? Where did they play?

I played for my hometown Academy, Weston FC, since I was eight years old. I still play with them during my summers where they have a men's team that competes in the USL2 league (semi pro). Therefore, I have been playing with them for about 11 years now.

What led you to Rochester?

In short, I chose to come to Rochester because it had the best of both worlds. It has an amazing school of engineering and a very competitive soccer program with amazing facilities. When I visited the school for the first time, I loved the campus and the people. The people I met were amazing and so welcoming. Honestly, it was a no-brainer for me to choose this school.

What are your plans for next year?

I still have an extra year of eligibility because of COVID so at the moment I am planning on taking a 5th year to play another year of college soccer and either get a masters or apply for a Take Five program.

Sarah Martin

WOMEN'S SOCCER

HOMETOWN: Chittenago, NY **MAJOR:** Health, Behavior & Society

Your plate is pretty full with one major and two minors. How are you keeping everything together? You were named to the UAA All-Academic team and are a member of the Provost's Circle in 2023. My life is held together by my google calendar haha. What has helped me as a student athlete is having all my classes, practices, exams, and games neatly put into my google calendar to make sure I never miss anything and can plan ahead!

How do the minors tie-in with the major of Health & Behavior in Society?

I'm a pre-med student, so the hope is to become a doctor one day. As a first year I came in as a Biology major but one thing I began to notice from my science classes was that health is inexplicably linked to the human experience. The community we live in and the people we interact with all have a real influence on our health and so I switched my major to HBS (a public health major) in order to encapsulate that. Then with my minors I chose Biology to capture the scientific attributes of health and ethics as being a physician requires a lot of ethical decision making what with situations like organ donation and HIPAA. I think that each area of study I chose combines into a holistic pre health education.

You are on a Pre-Med track with HBS. Do you see yourself moving ahead with community-based service in the health field?

Yeah, I definitely do. I think my public health major has oriented me towards more community-based extracurriculars because I see the value in treating health in a more holistic, equitable way. I am currently the president of our campus' Doctors Without Borders chapter and am working on creating an initiative with the local organization Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services. As an actual physician, I would love to continue that sort of community-based work to provide medical care to local underserved communities.

In the Saunders Research Center at the UR Medical Center, you have done extensive research collecting data on childhood asthma. What are you discovering?

I really love my job in Dr. Halterman's Pediatric Asthma lab because I am able to have 1v1 conversations with local families who are dealing with asthma and learn about their house conditions, their ability to access health care, and their knowledge about proper asthma care. I've seen a lot of cases where families are struggling to find safe housing without asthma irritants or get an appointment with a specialist and our lab is unique in that it can help bring these families better care and direct them to resources to help improve not only their asthma but their lives.

You have also researched COVID vaccine efficacy at the Brain & Cognitive Science lab. What is the research showing?

Currently I am writing my first first-author research paper on this topic that will hopefully be published. I presented my research at our campus' undergraduate research exposition last spring but basically we have been looking at what questions children were asking about the COVID-19 vaccine and how parents responded to those questions. We saw relationships between certain parental factors such as their biology knowledge, information sources, and stress levels on the types of answers parents gave their children. This research will help us look into the way parents communicate vaccine/health information.

Let's talk about the last two years on the soccer pitch. Rochester traditionally plays one of the nation's toughest schedules. How challenging is it as you prepare for game week against yet another regionally-ranked opponent?

It's challenging but fun! Playing the best teams in the nation in the UAA and in the region makes for competitive games and excitement. Our competitive schedule also lets us travel to great cities like Chicago, New York, Boston, and Atlanta.

In 2021, you played in all 16 games (nine starts) and were third in scoring (3 goals, 1 assist). The team got off to a strong start last year – unbeaten through seven matches (four wins, three ties). You played every match that year, too. The defense has been strong both years. Is there a key to that?

We have a great defensive line! I think the key to it is that we spend a lot of time in training going over defensive tactics and do really in-depth film sessions to analyze how we can improve against our next opponent.



How old were you when you began playing soccer? When did you decide to stick with it as a sport?

I began playing soccer when I was 18 months old! My dad put me in a "lil kickers" soccer team at one of our local sports centers and I never stopped from there. It was something my dad and I loved to do together. He would drive me to tournaments and coached my youth soccer team up until middle school. I loved spending time with him and probably around 6th grade decided I really wanted to work towards being a college soccer player.

When coach Ashley Van Vechten took over in January, 2022, she worked with you on voluntary leadership skills. Can you elaborate on that?

She came in and put a big emphasis on developing everyone on our team into leaders to work better together on and off the field. She held voluntary, morning sessions to learn about things like taking accountability, being aware of our egos, and communicating effectively. I have seen a lot of improvement since she came here in my confidence in my own leadership decision making!

One of your responsibilities is to anticipate the needs of your teammates for Coach. Is that a game-prep task?

Yeah, definitely! Knowing what your teammates need whether it be helping them know when they can be seen by the trainers, or what uniforms they need – its helpful to think ahead about possible questions my teammates have in order to answer them before they're even asked. It helps our team run smoother and our pre-game trips go more efficiently, in turn helping us be best prepared to win our games!

Which courses are you looking forward to this fall?

I'm really excited to take the class Healthcare & Law and Psychology of Well-Being. I think they both will be really interesting to learn about.

What's ahead for next year?

This past summer I took the MCAT and that was really the final thing I needed before focusing on putting together my medical school application to apply next May. After I apply in May I'll be taking my gap year before medical school and am going to apply to a few programs like the Fulbright Scholarship competition and maybe even coming back to Rochester for a Take 5!

Nolan Sparks

BASEBALL

HOMETOWN: **Aurora, CO** MAJOR: **Neuroscience and Business**

How did the summer season go? You planned on pitching for the Vermont Mountaineers in the New England Collegiate Baseball League. You're going against college players from all levels, aren't you.

The summer was fantastic. I was super glad to succeed in a high-level summer league playing against elite college athletes from Division 1 programs along with being one of the best pitchers in the league.

In the summer of 2022, you pitched for the Batavia Muckdogs in the Perfect Game Collegiate League. Have you pitched in any other summer leagues?

I have played in the Coastal Plains League, the New England Collegiate Baseball League, the Perfect Game Collegiate League, and the Cape Cod Baseball League.

You had a very strong junior year: ABCA and D3Baseball.com First Team All-Region; First Team All-Liberty League and LL Pitcher of the Year. You were UR's starter for the first game of every league weekend in 2023. That's a lot of pressure, isn't it?

I believe it's only a lot of pressure if you let it get the best of you. I remind myself that it's a game that I have loved since I was a kid, so I'm just so grateful to still be playing and at a high level.

Away from the field, you were a Teaching Assistant in Organic Chemistry. What were your responsibilities as a T-A?

I had to prepare the lab, along with answers to problem sets, and be ready to answer any questions students had. I was also responsible with grading.

You did research in the Loiselle Lab at the UR Medical Center where you worked in the center for musculoskeletal research. What did the research determine?

At the Loiselle lab I helped start a pilot experiment on tendons in mice in an attempt to discover changes to the tissue through aerobic exercise.

Briefly, what areas does Neuroscience touch on as a major?

Neuroscience touches so much, it's hard to find things just about life that isn't related to neuroscience. Some classes that I have taken and plan on taking discuss how the nervous system develops, how it affects behavior and how it controls our body.

In your business studies, you were named a Simon Scholar by the William E. Simon School of Business. What will a business background do for you down the road?

A business background can help in pretty much any field I choose to go into down the road. It will help me in climbing the ladder of the organizations I choose to be a part of.

When you were home in Aurora, CO (East of Denver), did you play with any travel teams? Where did those teams play?

I played for Lightning Baseball out of Parker, Colorado. We played all throughout the state and in other states such as Washington, Idaho, and Montana.



Professional teams, regardless of the sport, talk about the atmosphere in Denver (the Mile-High City). When you go home for breaks, do you get hit with the atmosphere issues, even if you are not playing sports?

For the first couple days when I come back I notice a slight difference, but growing up here I am quick to adjust.

Rochester could play as often as four or five days in a week if the weather doesn't interfere. You have work to do on the days you don't pitch. When do you find time to organize your academic studies?

I find time by just managing my schedule well and making sure I have a plan on all of the things I need to get done that day.

You were an Academic All-American in Spring 2023 and several teammates were named to the All-District team. Do all of you work with the younger players on their academics, helping with courses, pointing out areas of study, etc?

Yes, many of our older teammates help out each other with studying for classes others have already taken and can help answer questions.

HOMETOWN: Qingdao, China **MAJOR:** Statistics

When did you begin to consider the University of Rochester as a place to study and to play?

In the summer of 2019.

As a player at Monteverde Academy in Florida, you had a good level of success on the junior level, winning at the FCG International Championship and the Buick Junior Golf Championship. You also played at the Faldo Series US Grand Final and the ‘Zhanglianwei’ Invitational. How big were those tournaments and where were they played?

FCG International Championship is a really big tournament. There are more than 180 people from more than 20 countries, played at Sycuan, CA. (Ed. Note – Sycuan is east of San Diego.) The Buick Junior Golf Championship is high level tournament in China, played at Beijing, China. The ‘Zhanglianwei’ Invitational is the highest level tournament in China, played at Shenzhen, China.

When did you start playing golf? Is that what eventually led you to play at Monteverde Academy?

I started playing golf 12 years ago. I think Florida is one of the best places to improve my golf skill.

Your academic major is Statistics. That can be a complicated major, can’t it?

It is a complicated major, but I was a math major, compared to that, stat is little easier.

On the course, your statistics have been very good. You were the top UR golfer as a junior. You earned All-America honors from the Coaches Association along with all-conference and all-region honors. You knocked two strokes off your average from 2021-22 to 2022-23. What adjustments did you make that led to the improvement?

I think the first year at UR golf I was not adapted, but now I think I am getting used to the course (in relation) to the tournament I play. I think I work really hard. The score says everything.

Where did you concentrate your efforts in the off-season this year?

I focus on practice, working on my irons to keep my hand feeling.

What’s the strong point of your game? And the part that you are always striving to be better?

My strong point is my driver I have over 80 percent of my drives land on the fairway. My putting needs to get better. I lost five strokes per round.

With the exception of the ‘local’ tournaments that UR plays (Fred B. Kravetz Invitational, Hershey Cup, Liberty League



Championships), the majority of the others are played some distance away (the UAA holds its event in Florida). How are you able to put in the academic work around all the travel?

I used to get work done early, maybe two days before (each) tournament, so academics won’t distract my sports.

This year, you and four teammates were named All-America Scholars by the Coaches’ Association. Is that helpful if you are doing a group study while playing on the road?

It will definitely help. We always work together if we have same class or if anyone took that class before.

Do you get a chance to go home during the school year or only during the summer?

Only in the summer.

Which academic courses are you looking forward to this semester?

Stat 218 because I really like to go Prof. Cimineli’s class.

What plans do you have for next year?

I plan to have a lower average on golf and win a tournament as an individual. Academically I want to get 3.7 or above GPA.

Matt Wiele

MEN'S BASKETBALL

HOMETOWN: West Harrison, NY **MAJOR:** Mechanical Engineering

You began to come into your own as a sophomore, when UR made a run to the NCAA Division III playoffs. What do you remember about that particular season?

That was the season I felt we improved the most as a team. We started off the season with a few disappointing losses to our cross-town rivals St. John Fisher and Naz but we kept improving through the end and put up a great fight against a top-3 team in the country in their gym. I also remember that I started the season only playing minutes at the end of a not-close game, and ended the season playing in overtime of our tournament game against one of the best teams in the country.

The playoff games at second-ranked Marietta were a madhouse with the crowd right on top of you. Can you shut the crowd noise off?

In that gym there really is no tuning out that noise. Usually I don't hear anything that is going on in the crowd during a game, but the amount of noise in that gym was incredible. Part of what made that game so enjoyable despite the loss was embracing and appreciating the atmosphere in that gym. It started off as an extra challenge in the beginning of the game, but hearing a crowd like that go quiet when the away team does something good also puts wind in your sails in a different way.

Your stats over the last two seasons show you as one of the top shot-blockers in the UAA. What's the most important part of trying to block an opponent's shot – reaction, anticipation, etc.?

I think the most important part of blocking a shot is reading a player's movement. Understanding where they picked up their dribble and how they are going to use their allotted two steps before shooting can really telegraph how a player is going to take their shot. Just observing and playing a lot of basketball, I've learned the best time to jump, the best place to put my arms to block them without fouling etc. Also the height and being able to jump pretty well help too.

Last year's schedule was rated the toughest in the nation. How challenging is it to go against Division III's best teams every night?

I wouldn't have it any other way. I would way rather be challenged week after week than having a game I feel I don't have to worry about. Iron sharpens iron after all.

What will you work on to get ready for the upcoming season?

My preparation for this coming season has been very mental. One of the biggest criticisms of my play last season was that I didn't play with the same aggression or mindset that I did (the year before). Next year, having lost three different 1,000 point scorers, we all need to be a little more assertive trying to put the ball in the basket now that we can't just rely on those guys. In terms of my actual play, I've mostly been working on being a more dynamic, less one dimensional player who can beat you in multiple ways because that is harder to game plan against.

When were you first approached by the University as a potential place to study and to play? When did you make a final decision?

The way I got in touch with the U of R was actually through their elite recruiting camp. I had been to Rochester on an academic visit on the recommendation of my high school advisor and then decided to sign myself up for their recruiting camp. It was at that recruiting camp where the mutual interest grew. After that, I had my overnight visit with the team and from there, my mind was set.

Where did you develop your interest in mechanical engineering?

I had always had an affinity for math and sciences, but there was never one subject that I felt particularly strong towards. With mechanical engineering I kind of got a taste of chemistry, physics and math so it felt like the most natural choice.

Have you done any internships in that field in the last two years?

The one internship that I did was this past summer and it was actually for a tech startup which was more in the field of coding and computer science than it was in the field of mechanical engineering. Last summer, I did work at a marina helping mechanics work on boats which I thought was very interesting and a lot of fun.



In the fall semester, you will start planning your senior engineering project. Do you have any tentative plans now? Will you have the full spring semester to complete the work?

I do not have any plans going into the senior design project, but there are some people in my classes who I work well together with so I'm hoping I can work with them on the project. A lot of my school work in the spring will be centered around my senior design project and I'm looking forward to providing something of value to the community while I'm studying.

Which league did The Hackley School play in? How far did you travel for games?

We played in a league called the Ivy Prep School League. We were the only Westchester (County) team in our league, with all of the other schools being prep schools in NYC. Because we were the only school outside of the city, we had to travel quite a bit for some of the games, especially when we went to Brooklyn.

Any AAU ball? Where did you play?

I played AAU for one year. I played for a team called Sixth Boro which was a team for players in Westchester and the Bronx to get some exposure to college coaches. Looking back I wish I had played more AAU basketball because I really enjoyed spending time with my teammates on long roadtrips or between games.

You won an award for Band Ensemble at Hackley. Which instrument did you play and how did you get interested in that?

I played the trombone in high school. I started playing trombone all the way back in 3rd grade at Purchase Elementary School because all students had to pick an instrument to learn for two years. I continued playing the instrument throughout middle and high school so I had a lot of time to practice and play. In high school, I played in the band ensemble as well as the jazz band, and even though I spent four years in a jazz band, I somehow managed to go the whole time without playing an improv solo in a concert (which I was terrified to do).

Luke Wilson

FOOTBALL

HOMETOWN: **Alexandria, VA** MAJOR: **Business Analytics**

The team couldn't play when you arrived as a first-year in 2020 due to the pandemic. How anxious did that make you to get on the field as a sophomore in 2021?

Coming into that year, I thought I was ready to play college football. That was not the case unfortunately. With 2020 being a full prep year, I was able to develop and eventually find my role on the line. Going into the 2021 year, I was very anxious to get on the field. I felt like I needed to prove myself against a true opponent. Not to say our defense wasn't a true opponent, it just got tiring getting hit by Brad Beckwith every day in practice.

You've found a perfect spot for yourself with 20 consecutive starts on the offensive line. How do you feel you have developed from your first year on the gridiron in 2021 to your second year in 2022? Now your third year beckons.

Not only has my body developed in that year, my knowledge of the game has grown so much. There is the physical aspect of football, and then there is the chess match of knowing what your opponent will do. Knowing what the other team is going to do from play to play, or how a player will react to my movements makes the game so much easier. Knowing that helps you adjust to perform your best.

Now you're heading into your third straight year, this time as one of the leaders. What has Coach Martinovich asked of you to help the younger players develop?

He wants me to be myself. Setting an example for the younger players to follow is important to building a culture that will last a long time.

Leadership is much more than 'do as I do', isn't it?

In a way I would say it is 'do as I do', but with an additional piece of, 'see my accomplishments because of what I do'. I have received some recognition over the years and let that do the talking. Telling people what they 'need' to do is way different than showing them the path of what they 'should' do. I haven't made every correct decision, but I recognize my faults and I can show others a better path. It's sort of a balancing act of when to be vocal and when to be an example that I have worked on over the years.

The linemen paved the way for one of the best rushing seasons in UR history last fall. What made everything click?

There are a lot of individual performances that build up into a football team, and the offensive line is truly a group effort. Because it is a five-man effort, I can only be as good as the man next to me. If one of us fails, we all fail and the play is over. The offensive line is like an AC unit; you only notice it when it's not working. The best thing that we can do is to go unnoticed. That usually means everything is running smoothly. But what really made it click was the players around us. We have some really talented players in the backfield, and it doesn't take much to get them going. It would be a shame to let their talent go to waste. A shout-out to Daniel Papatonis and Will Varney.

Leadership comes in all forms, doesn't it? It's helping the younger players navigate the campus, including the academic challenges – and the balance of everything between team obligations, the academics, and meeting and playing with students from across the nation.

I try to strive to be the person my younger self would want in a mentor. Somebody who has already made the rounds, has already made mistakes, and now knows better. Recognizing your own failures is the first step in becoming a leader. Being considered a 'leader' by your peers and



coaches is a great recognition, but showing them first that you are actually a human, fail sometimes, and can admit that failure is key to gaining trust. Trust goes a long way, especially in football. However, at the end of the day, being a leader means making the people around you better. How can I make the people around me ultimately be better than me? Helping younger players develop to be better than you is the greatest impact you can leave on a team, because it sets up for future success.

How was it when you arrived on campus? Were there seniors who helped you to develop?

It was an unprecedented time on campus when I got here. We were all going through something like Covid for the first time, and there was no guarantee that we would play any games, so many of the seniors didn't feel the need to come back. There were a few players who did decide to come back for that year. Watching them gave me great examples of what to do and what not to do, both on and off the field.

Have you done any internships connected with the business analytics major? Where did you intern and what did you do?

I interned this past summer with the IT department at UR. I was in a business analyst type of position and helped perform a cost assessment for their cloud-based goals. There is much more to an IT department than I previously imagined.

Which courses are you looking forward to?

I am almost done fulfilling my major and cluster requirements. That being said, I look forward to taking some dance classes my spring semester.