

HIGH SCHOOL FIELD HOCKEY

SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

Lawrenceville's Rivera proving doubters wrong about her lack of height

By **JOE O'GORMAN**
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She has heard the whispers about being too small, but once those critics watch Nikki Rivera play field hockey, the murmurs become shouts about her ability.

Rivera, a senior at Lawrenceville, can stretch the tape to reach five feet and on the field that is five feet of sheer energy, passion and determination.

"I hear it a lot about my size," said Rivera. "When I tell people I play field hockey and ice hockey they look at me and say, 'Are you serious?' But people doubting me only motivates me to play harder."

Rivera possesses great speed, which, coupled with her desire to excel and succeed, have made her not only a catalyst for the success of the Big Red, but one of the premier players in the area.

"I try to go out and play every game like it's the last one," said Rivera. "I have always skated since I was younger and a lot of the skill has transformed over to field hockey. I believe I have to win the race to every ball."

Usually she does, as Rivera plays the game with a reckless abandon that has earned the respect of her teammates, her coaches and her opponents.

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"She is a tiny but powerful machine," said Lawrenceville coach Lisa Ewanchyna. "She is fearless. It is her selflessness that makes her really great."

A couple of great things for Rivera have been to play for Lawrenceville and to be one of the leaders of the young Big Red team.

"We have a young team and the younger girls have really been stepping up," Rivera said. "It's great that I can lead my team and motivate them to do better. I'm definitely proud of this team."

There is nothing — short of a state title — that has made Rivera prouder than putting on the colors of Lawrenceville the last four years.

"This is a bittersweet year," said Rivera. "The idea of playing in college is exciting, but I'm really going to miss this team, the coaching and playing for Lawrenceville. Playing for this school means a lot to me."

Rivera has meant a lot to Lawrenceville and she has hushed a lot of critics along the way.

Rider to Host MCT Finals
The Mercer County Tournament field hockey, boys soccer and girls soccer finals will be held at Rider University on Oct. 29.

Field hockey will be played at 3 p.m. with the girls soccer at 5:30 p.m. and the boys to follow.

"This is a state-of-the-art facility and a wonderful opportunity to showcase our athletes in a championship atmosphere in a Division I facility," said Hightstown Athletic Director Gary Bushelli. "The Rider athletic administration led by Don Harnum (Athletic Director) and Karson Langenfelder (Director of Study Tours and Conference Services) were immediately receptive to being the host for these prestigious events."

There will be a \$3 charge for adults and \$2 for students and the fac-

ility will be cleared after the field hockey game, but not between the two soccer games.

Bushelli is very grateful to Mercer County College and AD John Simone for hosting the championships for years and MCC will once again be the host for all three tournament semifinals.

It is a great idea to host all three on the same evening and Bushelli is right on target with Rider's stadium being a top facility.

Three Things About This Week

1. Hopewell Valley and Robbinsville had a rematch of the 2010 Mercer County Tournament and it was the Bulldogs getting a hard-fought win.

2. We had a rematch of the MCT, so could Peddie at Lawrenceville this Saturday be a preview of the Prep A final?

3. Notre Dame is getting better each game and Lexi Chianese is leading the way.

Three Things About Next Week

1. The Mercer County Tournament seedings should make for some interesting conversation. It is great to have Lawrenceville among the participants.

2. The Ewing High Play for the Cure game is set for the Oct. 17 against Robbinsville. Please support this worthy cause.

3. Florence is coming to Notre Dame and it could be a Frappolli Fest.

Peddie Ready for the Challenge

The Falcons face powerful Shore Regional today — this team ducks no one — and once that is out of the way it's all about Lawrenceville. The game is set for Saturday at 2 p.m. on the Big Red's Fisher Field.

"The kids are really excited about this game," said Alli Treese, the Peddie coach. "It is just our second MAPL game in a quest for a repeat championship, but they are also looking to try to beat them on their own turf."

On turf, grass or a driveway somewhere, this should be a classic match of two of the prep powers in the state. It is also going to have seeding complications for the upcoming Prep A tourney.

The Falcons learned a little about themselves in the Eastern game and it paid off in a win over

Bridgewater.

Lawrenceville is playing with a lot of confidence too and hope to be up for the challenge as well.

Inside the Circle

- Congratulations to the Bordentown field hockey and girls soccer players that participated in the Six Flags Race for the Cure. They raised \$1,800 to fight breast cancer. The Scotties are playing with pink balls for the month of October to show their support for awareness of the disease.

- How tough is the Group I state tourney going to be with unbeaten Oak Knoll, New Egypt and Shore Regional? That's not to mention very good teams in Holy Cross and Florence.

- Former TCNJ All-American Tiffany Trockenbrod has Montgomery on the rise.

- If there is going to be a surprise team in the MCT it just might be Princeton.

- Here are the rankings: 1. **Peddie** - Will they hold the top spot next week? 2. **Hopewell Valley** - This is a team that finds a way to win. 3. **Lawrenceville** - Are they ready to move up the charts? 4. **Robbinsville** - Not a team to every overlook. 5. **Windsor** - Devin Brakel is never out of a game. 6. **Princeton** - This is a young team that keeps getting better. 7. **Hun** - It's that time of year. 8. **Allentown** - Another dangerous team. 9. **Hightstown** - Rams are ready to make a dominant scorer aware.

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Trentonian File Photo/GREGG SLABODA
Notre Dame's Lexi Chianese, left, is leading her team in the right direction.

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