



Sports

HIGH SCHOOL FIELD HOCKEY: Lawrenceville's Rivera proving her doubters wrong

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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.

"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.

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. WW-P North – Any team with 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 the year.
8. Allentown – Another dangerous team
9. Hightstown – The Rams are ready to make a tourney run.
10. Stuart – A dominant scorer away.

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