

WINTER 2021

# PEAK

FROM DARTMOUTH PEAK PERFORMANCE AND DARTMOUTH ATHLETIC SPONSORS

## SIDELINED

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON MENTAL HEALTH





# PEAK

WINTER 2021

Dartmouth Peak Performance  
6083 Alumni Gym  
Hanover, NH 03755

## CONTRIBUTORS

Pat McBride, Ian Connole,  
Bob Coppola, Ben Schuler,  
Julie Kliegman

## LAYOUT/DESIGN

Pat Salvas

## EDITORS

Salvas, McBride, Connole,  
Jessica Flink, Cindi Mansell,  
Rick Bender

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Gil Talbot, Doug Austin, Mark  
Washburn, John and Matt  
Risley, Bryan LaFontaine, Mike  
Janes, Getty Images, Dartmouth  
Archives, Reid Cashman

## COVER

Katie Forman '21 poses inside  
the new Dartmouth Indoor  
Practice Facility (Talbot)

[www.DartmouthSports.com](http://www.DartmouthSports.com)



A former Dartmouth basketball player, new Interim Director of Athletics and Recreation Peter Roby '79 played his home games in Thompson Arena (p. 7), a facility many still consider one of the best in college hockey.

# CONTENTS

Letter from Ben Schuler	2	NHL Bubble: Daly '86	14
What They're Saying	3	Rebound: McCartney '12	16
Q&A with Peter Roby	4	A Day in the Life	18
Veteran Coaches in COVID	8	Mentorship Programs	20
Cover Story: <i>Sidelined</i>	10	Sponsors	21



**DARTMOUTH ATHLETIC  
SPONSORS**





FROM THE DESK OF

Ben Schuler

Associate Director of Sports Medicine & Head Athletic Trainer

MY clinical education and professional training as an athletic trainer prepared me for a great many things, but a global pandemic was not one of them. I sat down to write this letter and was struck by the realization that 365 days ago I was asked to participate in initial meetings of the College COVID-19 Taskforce and various subcommittees. I, like everyone in those early days, thought we were talking about short-term changes and cancelations. None of us would have guessed we would still be navigating this crisis a year later.

Shortly after the cancellation of the 2020 winter championships and spring season, the Athletics Reopening Group was established to find a way for us to resume some level of athletic activity as safely as possible. Immediately, we set to work collaborating with the College COVID-19 Taskforce, connecting with counterparts at other schools, and liaising with the Ivy League to navigate this new path forward.

Last fall we saw the implementation of all manner of new restrictions, including a reduction of the number of students on campus by roughly half, an adapted “D-Plan,” maximum occupancies for all our fields and facilities, and a phased return to activity. These restrictions were put in place to safeguard our students as much as possible, and to that extent they worked.

While the Ivy League and College COVID-19 Task Force both provided strict guidelines as it related to athletics participation and COVID-19 protocols, we were tasked with applying these measures in detail to every facility and sports team. Applying the restrictions would not have been possible without the flexibility and adaptability of our coaches. Our reopening group met with every staff multiple times. We asked them to coach in ways they have never had to before, and they delivered. Looking back on the fall of 2020, in a time when every rep together felt monumental, Dartmouth Athletics provided more skill instruction opportunities than any of our Ivy counterparts. This small, but much appreciated, victory was short-lived with the cancellation of winter competition.

In January, we returned with eyes on spring and providing more opportunities for our student-athletes to train. Dartmouth successfully led the charge to update the Ivy League phased guidance to allow for more activity in the early phases of return to play. The term began with arrival testing, quarantines and twice weekly COVID-19 testing for all students and on campus staff out of Leverone Field House and Thompson Arena. Strength and conditioning activities — as well as skill instruction with coaches — picked up smoothly where it left off in the fall. Then came the most disappointing cancellation of a season yet with the Ivy Presidents’ announcement that there would not be an Ivy

spring sports season. They left the door open for potential local non-conference competition if campus policies permit, but it didn’t soften the blow felt by these teams, especially the seniors.

Our next hurdle of the winter term came when a campus-wide COVID-19 outbreak forced a suspension of all campus activities. To date, no contact tracing efforts have led back to participation in athletic activity, which we hope to continue through the spring term. Yet, the lost practice time and additional time spent in quarantine and isolation was no less difficult. The shutdown led right into the mandatory pause of athletics activities for finals and spring break. As we look to the spring term, we continue to explore ways to progress through phases as safely and expeditiously as possible and identifying pathways towards competition for our spring teams.

While the constraints have been vast, I can confidently say we have made the most out of the opportunities we had to enable student-athletes to engage in their sport with their teammates and coaches. The credit for this success belongs to many people: the athletics reopening group, sport administrators, sport coaches, strength and conditioning coaches, sports medicine staff, and most of all to our student-athletes. Their continued resilience is awe-inspiring. They are what motivates us to keep working and fighting to get back on the field.

ATHLETICS REOPENING GROUP

**Ben Schuler**  
Associate Director of Sports Medicine,  
Head Athletic Trainer: Co-Chair

**Richard Whitmore**  
Executive Associate Athletics Director:  
Co-Chair

**Dustin Smith**  
Associate Athletics Director for Facilities  
and Operations

**Julie Toland**  
Assistant Athletics Director for Facilities  
Scheduling and Event Planning

**Greg Isenor**  
Athletics Grounds Crew Supervisor

**Jane Lamire**  
Associate Athletics Director for Finance  
and Administration

**Michael Derosier**  
Associate Head Athletic Trainer

**Spencer Brown**  
Holekamp Family Director of  
Strength & Conditioning

**Michael Bissailon**  
Athletics Equipment Manager

WHAT THEY’RE SAYING...

MEMBERS OF THE FIVE REINSTATED ATHLETICS TEAMS TALK ABOUT THEIR RETURN



ANDRE QUINTILIANI '22  
LIGHTWEIGHT ROWING

*“I think one of the biggest challenges is shifting everyone’s focus back on committing to the team’s long-term goals that we set well over a year ago now. Heading into last spring, everyone came together and understood what we needed to accomplish, which was awesome. When the team got cut, it almost forced us into a different mindset where we had to prioritize these newer, individual athletic goals that most of us weren’t ready for. Not to mention they were pretty foreign, because we’ve all spent so long trying to work specifically on rowing skills. It’s going to take a little bit of time to collectively get everyone back in the mindset of training to row, both physically and mentally. With that being said, we have a great group of upperclassmen who have the maturity and edge to shift into that gear and motivate the rest of the team for the fall.”*



ASHLEY POST '22  
WOMEN’S SWIMMING & DIVING

*“I’ve been swimming for almost my entire life, so to have that suddenly not be a part of my college experience definitely made me consider transferring. Ultimately, I decided to stay because of the relationships I’ve formed at Dartmouth — through my teammates and others on campus, I knew that I wouldn’t be able to call any other school home.”*



BRANDON LIAO '21  
MEN’S SWIMMING & DIVING

*“Training obviously doesn’t feel normal given COVID restrictions, but it has been nice to be able to train with my teammates again. It’s awesome to see that many of my teammates still have the same work ethic despite very limited training and even though our team was cut for seven months.”*



JASON LIU '21  
MEN’S GOLF

*“The goal for our team is to be ready to compete at peak performance when our season begins again. One concern related to this is having a full, deep roster so we can bring our best line up to tournaments. Fortunately, all current members are committed to playing for the Big Green again, and a couple current 21’s (including myself) will be sticking around for an extra year to keep competing at Dartmouth. The whole process and experience of our team being eliminated and then reinstated has been a roller coaster of ups and downs, but we are doing our best.”*



KRISTEN CHEN '22  
WOMEN’S GOLF

*“Being the smallest team on campus, we definitely felt the gap in the missed recruiting year. However, I think our current interim coach has been working with ‘admissions in order to help us overcome this major hurdle. As for the second challenge (losing head coach Alex Kirk), this really took a major hit on team morale. I believe though we can definitely overcome this obstacle by sticking together and focusing ourselves on improving our games, so we’re prepared for our next season.”*

The recruiting visits of these five student-athletes were made possible by the generosity of Jessica & Richard Li DP and Harriet Warm & Dick Blum '53 DP (Quintiliani), Don McCree Jr. '58 and Mark Heller '70 (Post), Margaret Abbott DP and Joshua Dines '96 (Liu) and Debra Williamson '81 and Doug Hayes '65 (Chen) through the Dartmouth Athletic Sponsors program.



# 11 10 QUESTIONS WITH PETER ROBY '79



## How gratifying is it to be back at Dartmouth and serving as the Athletics Director at your alma mater?

The full circle nature of my arrival on campus has not been lost on me. Having conversations recently with former teammates and classmates that were on campus around the time I was there, I couldn't help but think back and appreciate the nature of my return to campus, where my college experience began first as a student-athlete and then in my first coaching job, which set me off on this wonderful career working in athletics. Part of what has made me reminisce about it is how much I developed during my time as an undergraduate and how transformational that experience was. I've always looked back with such appreciation for the relationships I developed at Dartmouth with my teammates and head coach Gary Walters; relationships that I maintain 45 years later. For Gary, it was all about being an educator who happened to use sports to educate and help develop young people.

## Who, besides Gary Walters, has had a big influence on your life?

I can't really talk about those who influenced my life without talking about my father. He was someone who loved sports but never got a chance to go to high school and play sports. He instilled in me this love of sport and love of education and helped me appreciate how important a quality education was going to be in leveling the playing field. If you weren't from wealth, came from a different side of the city or your circumstances were such that you didn't have a lot of advantages, then the equalizer was a great education. That always stuck with me and was the reason why I wanted to attend a school with the kind of reputation academically that Dartmouth has.

When I was a student-athlete here, I met some wonderful people like Lee Julian, the widow of Doggie Julian, the great coach at Dartmouth and, before that, the Celtics. Lee took me under her wing and that led to a lifelong relationship with her and her children. It was inspiring to know I was connected to her husband's legacy; when I won the Doggie Julian Award as a senior, it was really special to me because I felt like I knew Coach Julian, through my relationship with Lee. Seaver Peters '54, the athletic director at the time, was also a big influence and played an important role in getting me to Dartmouth. Gary Dicovitsky '72, who was a player here and then my freshman coach, was such a wonderful, kind and caring person. He is a loyal son of Dartmouth in every way.

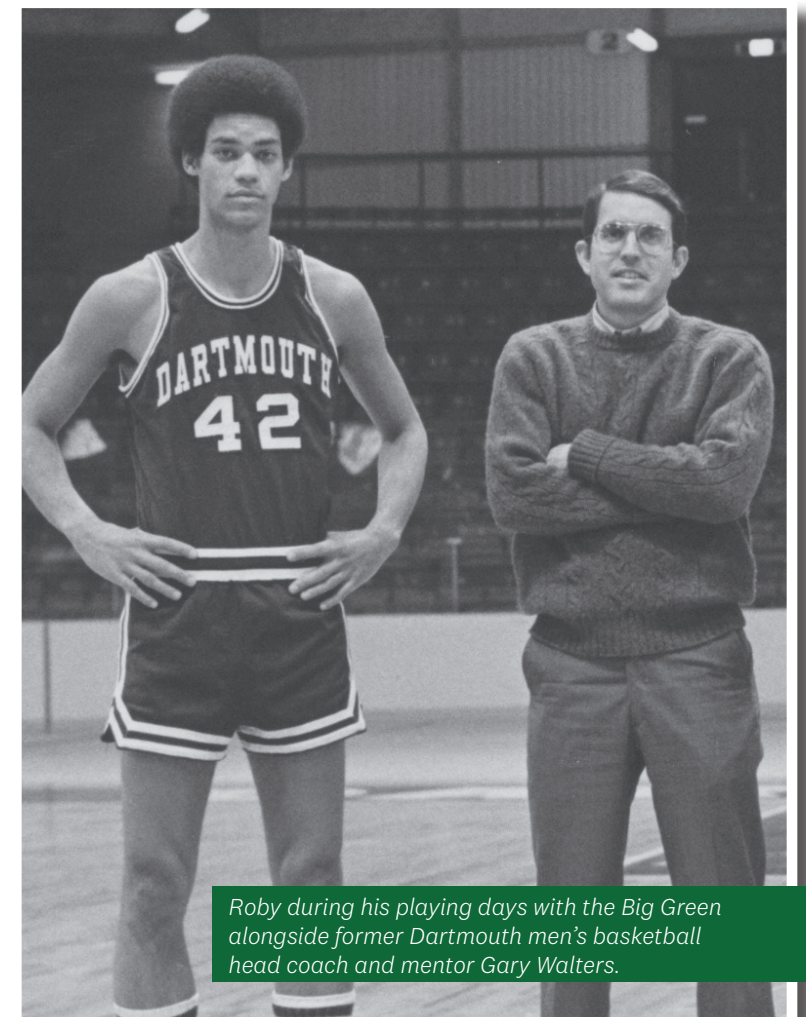
## What are some of your near-term goals as you evaluate the landscape of Dartmouth Athletics?

Given the circumstances around my return to campus, it is really important from a short-term

standpoint that the goals be about making sure the student-athletes and coaches from those reinstated teams are getting all the attention they need and that we make them feel welcomed, respected and valued. For those that need new head coaches, it is important that we find quality people to lead those programs so we can stabilize them and focus on the future. Everything I do will be about putting the student-athlete at the center and making sure that any attempts we make to achieve success are done on behalf of the student-athletes and not at their expense.

## What do you think are the biggest assets for the athletics department?

I think the overall Dartmouth experience is a unique asset. Then, it's the people. We have extraordinary people involved on our campus who are talented and dedicated, so we want to make sure we value the people here and do what we can on their behalf. It's also our student-athletes. They are the real assets because they represent us and our values in the best possible way. The idea of not compromising academically or athletically represents the kinds of student-athletes that come to Dartmouth to compete. Next, it's our alumni. Not many colleges can brag about the loyalty and support that Dartmouth College has from its alumni. And finally, we have some of the most extraordinary



Roby during his playing days with the Big Green alongside former Dartmouth men's basketball head coach and mentor Gary Walters.



## FEATURE

facilities for any college athletics department, and you know that's a source of pride for all of us. It speaks to the college's commitment to the athletic department, but it also speaks to the loyalty and the generosity of so many donors.

Tying all that together is DP2 because of the unique organizational structure and the competitive advantage it gives us. The way we look at student-athlete wellness and performance through a collaborative lens is special.



### What do you think are its biggest challenges?

First, we must overcome some of the distrust and hurt that people are feeling right now, given what we've gone through. Building back that trust is going to take time, consistency and understanding which I totally get. As a College, we continue to be under pressure financially, so it's important we make really good choices about where money is spent so we can maximize its impact and also be really good stewards of private support we get from so many loyal donors. That way we can say, without hesitation, that we're putting those resources to really good use. The other challenge is that we are in a situation where we have seven other institutions that make up the Ivy Group that are really competitive and have talented people as well that are striving to achieve the same sort of goals that we're striving to achieve, and so that competition is keen. We must position ourselves for the future, to be able to compete with the other institutions in the Ivy League, and that's a formidable challenge. We are not going to be able to do that unless we come together as a community.

### How would you describe your leadership style?

My leadership style is a values driven one. I feel that it is important to espouse a certain set of expectations and values of how you want people to work together and how you want them to communicate. The consistency of that communication needs to be matched by consistency in our actions. I'm one that strongly believes in the connection between leadership and culture.

### How has your previous professional work, including your tenures as AD and Director of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern, shaped the approach you bring to Dartmouth?

My experience at Sport in Society had a really big impact on my work and how I go about it because I developed a real appreciation for social justice, equity and fairness, and the power of sport, and I try to bring that perspective to my work as an athletic director by viewing what we do through a social justice lens. That includes things like fairness, consistency, advocacy, empowerment and empathy. Those are all qualities that I try to bring to my work and came to appreciate from my time there.

### What are your impressions of DP2 and the work it does to support the student-athletes?

DP2 is unique and powerful because it brings together all of our resources to make a positive impact on the Dartmouth experience for our student-athletes. We are harnessing all our resources in an efficient way with respect to strength & conditioning, sports medicine, sports performance, counseling, academic support, community service, leadership development, diversity and inclusion, and mentoring. DP2 is a tangible representation of our values as an athletics department and it's powerful because you see it at work every day. I know there's not a day that goes by, when we're back to a full and normal experience, where the stu-

dent-athletes and, in many cases, the coaches won't be touched by some aspect of DP2. It's a competitive advantage for us to have an organization and the people working in that area.

### What are your personal philosophies on the importance of programs like DP2 at the collegiate level?

There has been a real emergence of this collaborative approach to care delivery and support of the student-athlete experience, and it's something I came to appreciate when I was the athletic director at Northeastern. I tried to break down silos between strength & conditioning and sports medicine and bring them under one umbrella for the exact reason DP2 exists on our campus today. It is always about trying to bring resources together to work more efficiently on behalf of the student-athlete so they can be better prepared to compete at a high level, get them back on the field when they have an injury and try to do injury prevention on the front end. It's an innovative approach and fits right in with the philosophy I tried to articulate and execute when I was getting started in my athletics career at Northeastern.

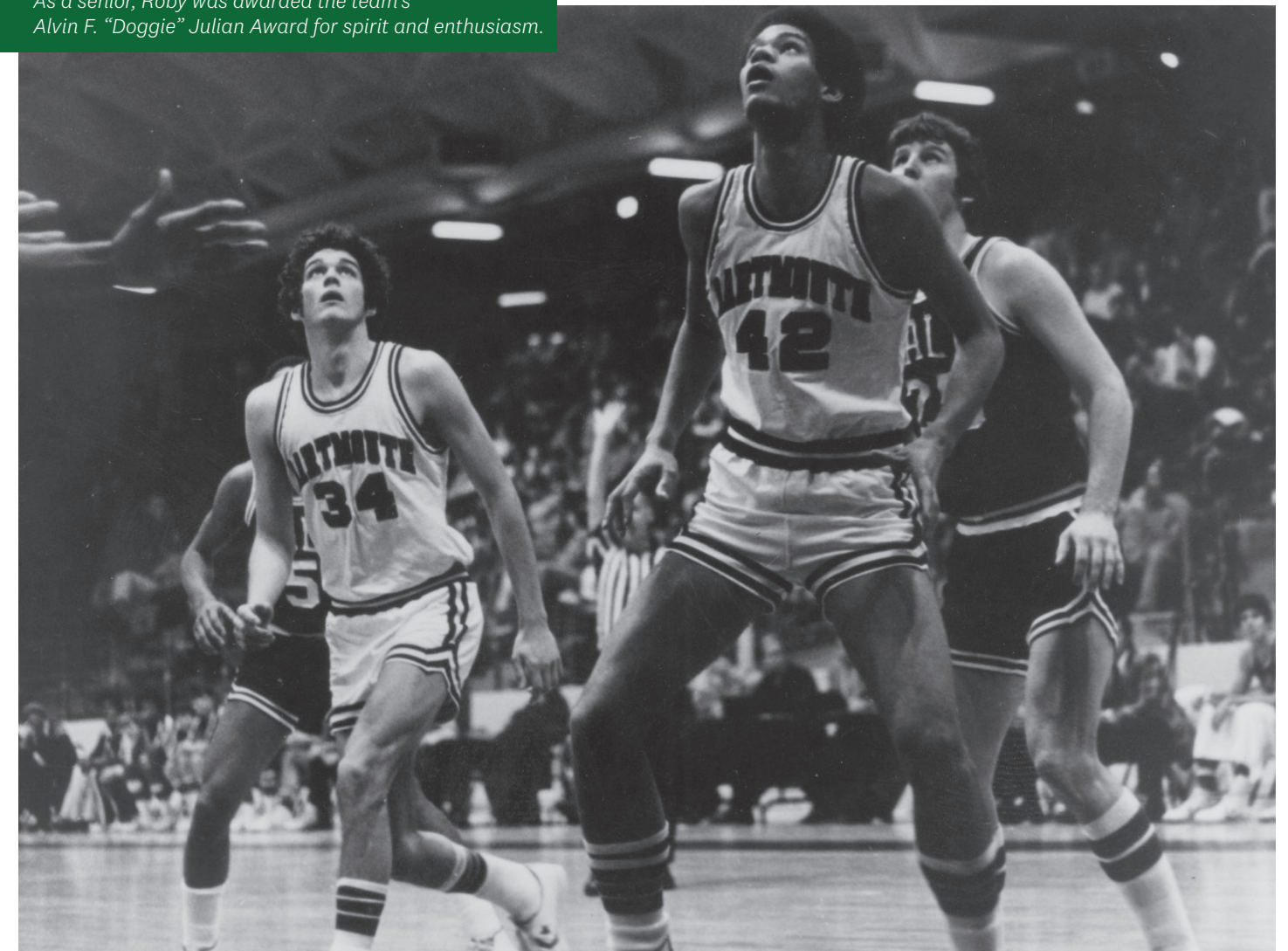
### In what ways would you like to see DP2 continue to grow?

We need to meet the student-athletes where they are. I think the future of DP2 will come as a result of our experiences trying to address the needs of the 21st-century student-athlete. It's hard to know exactly, but I can tell you that given how innovative our DP2 staff is, how innovative our coaches are and how our athletes are striving for excellence, we will be pushed to find new solutions to the challenges that come our way over the next few decades.

### What's your favorite memory from your playing days at Dartmouth?

That's a tough one because there are so many, and because I had great teammates that loved each other and still do to this day. I would say that my favorite memory is being part of a team that went 4-22 as a sophomore to one that finished 14-12 as seniors, which was the second-best record in 20 years. We did that by staying together, believing in each other and trying to get better every day for each other. I think it's the arc of my career at Dartmouth and the relationships with my teammates and coaches that provided the real highlights.

*As a senior, Roby was awarded the team's Alvin F. "Doggie" Julian Award for spirit and enthusiasm.*





## FEATURE

CAMI THOMPSON GRAVES  
AND  
PETER DODGE '78



# THE VETERANS

How the three longest-tenured coaches have rolled with the punches.

by Pat McBride

No one, no matter how long they have coached, could have anticipated what was to come.

For ski coaches Cami Thompson Graves and Peter Dodge '78, with more than 60 years of collegiate coaching experience between them, the challenge of supporting their student-athletes was front and center. Given the uniqueness of skiing, such as international competition and the nuanced differences between training for Nordic and Alpine teams, there were several factors to consider as they approached a plan to best address the challenges of the pandemic.

"Initially, we tried to create a Plan A, Plan B and Plan C based on what we knew back in the fall," said Dodge. "We started early, back in October, to come up with a plan for our athletes to ski independently with other programs and we encouraged the kids to take responsibility within the process as well. Our athletes are on a variety of tracks and because of that they are inherently independent, so we tried to factor that into our process."

"The end result is that our skiers are racing a lot but are doing so with constant changes."

Dodge noted while also incredibly busy during a normal ski season, he finds himself just as busy this year with many of his skiers away from campus. Keeping track of 10 student-athletes, from Bulgaria to California, and supporting them through logistical challenges while also scheduling time to review film and watch races over Zoom, has provided a critical connection point but required an even greater time investment.

For Thompson Graves, she feels fortunate that there are so many quality cross-country programs, which allowed her student-athletes to make the best choice for them – to come to campus and train here or remain at home, training with local clubs.

"Most of our athletes are getting what they need in terms of training, which is comforting," said Thompson Graves. "The kids are also doing their best to keep it fun, work hard and balance their training with the remote learning component. They've generally stayed healthy and have managed to train consistently, which is the most important thing right now."

Even though there are fewer Dartmouth skiers in town, Dodge remains actively engaged at the Skiway, ensuring the facility remains in good condition for this year and beyond. And despite the lack of activity and competition, he sees a silver lining for his athletes around training and development.

"This year is a gift in terms of ski racing," said Dodge. "There is no effect on a student-athletes' eligibility and the international rankings have been frozen, so our kids have the freedom to work on technique and fitness without worrying about qualifying and rankings. It's a unique opportunity and I think our racers are taking advantage and making the best of it."

On the Nordic side, Thompson Graves employs similar methods as Dodge, using virtual check-ins with her skiers to assess progress and watching races when she can. She also employs an online training log, linked to the athletes' heart-rate monitors, to surveil how they are feeling and doing day to day. In the end, both coaches were clear that whatever is accomplished this year will be a testament to the perseverance of the student-athletes themselves, with an assist from the coaches.

"Overall, I do feel that (the student-athletes) are doing very well, given the circumstances, but it has mostly to do with their ability to be independent and assess what is best for them," said Thompson Graves. "After helping them develop a training plan, our role has been fairly minimal, honestly. We are supporting them however we can and cheering them on at every opportunity, trying to keep things as positive as possible."

"Some of the guys are expressing a readiness for this to be over and I think we all feel that way," added Dodge. "There has been lots of racing, but it is very hit or miss, which makes it hard to plan. That said, everyone misses being together as a team, the focus we have as a group and, most importantly, the opportunity to support each other on a daily basis."

The quality and abundance of snow has provided a silver lining for the coaches this winter and has provided a quality training experience for the skiers on campus. It has also allowed the coaches to sprinkle in a bit of fun to keep things interesting.

"Nearly half our team was back for winter term, so it felt a lot more like traditional team training," said Thompson

Graves. "We do have a few who are racing but not nearly as many as we normally would, so it's allowed us to do things like headlamp sprints on the golf course and long skis in the morning to change up the routine. Our athletes have also had a chance to factor in some backcountry skiing or alpine they wouldn't normally get to do in a normal year."

"By the end of the season, all of the skiers will be itching to get into a training routine with a more focused approach for next year. We spent a lot of time planning for things that didn't happen, and we are really missing out on things like testing wax and race-day logistics. At the same time, we've done our best to keep everyone engaged and focused on the future."

\*\*\*

Baseball in the Northeast is challenging enough, but managing it in the context of a pandemic is easier with the steady hand of veteran coach Bob Whalen '79a. Now in his 32nd year at Dartmouth with over 600 wins to his credit, Whalen has seen a lot during his career – but nothing like this.

"In this situation, just like in parenting, you are doing as well as the worst child is doing, so we are trying to stay upbeat and make sure everyone has the support they need to get through it," said Whalen. "As much as everyone has good days and bad days, we can't do much about the situation we are in. We certainly let our players express their concerns, but all we can do is continue to make good choices and make the best of it."

As Whalen pointed out, the Ivy League was the first conference to shut down in 2020 and received heavy criticism for it, for about 48 hours, before every

other conference ultimately followed suit. In that decision was the reality that the Ivy League put the safety of its players first and, while that theme has been consistent over the last 12 months, the feeling is different this year for one very noteworthy reason.

"We are the only Division I conference not playing, which is hard, especially after cutting things short last spring," said Whalen. "There will inevitably be bumps in the road for those that are playing but we knew this was likely coming, so we at least had a chance to prepare for it."

Despite the potential for a second shuttered season, Whalen has attacked the challenge head on and moved forward with a 'stay positive, stay connected, stay together' approach, and a plan to support his players and provide the best possible training opportunities.

"Every team is different and has different needs," said Whalen. "It was clear our guys did not want to Zoom three times a week and artificially fill their day; they have plenty of things to do, especially in that virtual space."

"My job was not to fill in with programming, but to connect in a consistent and direct way. As we got further into the summer and the fall, it was more about connecting when I had important information. My personality is to be direct, and I wanted to maintain trust and felt the best way to do that was to be as truthful as possible."

Many of the discussions that Whalen has with his players focus very little on baseball, but on the more important, bigger-picture topics like family, health and academics. Utilizing Assistant AD for DP2 and Academics Lindsay Ostler to work through remote learning, Sport Dietician Shira Evans to provide nutritional guidance and support, as well as Senior Associate AD Tiffani Sykes to share information related to off-terms, summer baseball and informal workouts, Whalen sought to provide the information the players needed to minimize stress for them and their families.

"I try to stay as consistent as possible in what we talk about and how we talk about it within our value system," said Whalen. "We'd talk about the same things if we were together on campus and do most of that around our practices, but now we need to be more

deliberate and anticipate the many questions they have about things like eligibility, waivers, the D-Plan and all the other moving parts."

Additional calls with alumni such as former Philadelphia Phillies general manager Matt Klentak '02 (business side of sports), pro pitchers Beau '17 and Cole Sulser '12 (playing at the next level) and Brian Conroy '86 (corporate recruiting and culture) have allowed for growth away from the game.

For those on campus, it was as close to business as usual as possible, using the fall to integrate eight freshmen into the program and moving indoors during winter term with 14 different team members. Whalen expects to have 17 on campus for the spring term, which eliminates the opportunity for true intra-squad games and will force the coaching staff to remain creative to keep players working hard within the guidelines on campus.

Widely known for his meticulous practice planning and organization around indoor workouts, this is a pencil-sharpening exercise for someone with Coach Whalen's experience and expertise.

"We are really trying to maximize our time together and work on individual skill yet still need to find elements of competition to do that," said Whalen. "We are taking kids from different positions and creating competitions against each other and mixing up our pitch development to change the focus from velocity one day to pitch command the next and strike percentage the following, all in an effort to keep the players engaged and maintain their competitive fire."

For Whalen, quick to respect the decision of the Ivy League, his biggest concern is the ripple effect of the decision and the variety of ways each student-athlete has been already impacted.

"From day one, I've told our kids to take responsibility for the process, read the emails, listen to the campus conversations and have discussions with your parents about what is best for you and your family," said Whalen. "It's been a challenging year in so many ways, but as I was once told, 'Tough times don't last, tough people do' and I am proud of the way our team has handled things."



BOB WHALEN '79a





# SIDELINED

A NEW PERSPECTIVE  
ON MENTAL HEALTH

BY JULIE KLEGMAN

**Katie Forman '21** was sidelined from lacrosse. Again. This time permanently, she decided. After nine or so concussions through her high school and college career, the Dartmouth backup goalie was done on the field. She had to be, for her well-being. But the choice was far from easy.

"Stepping away from the game was stepping away from my sanctuary," she wrote on the blog *The Sideline Perspective* last July. "It was stepping away from the safety net that I had built that was keeping me from jumping over the edge."

During this time, Forman was anxious. She was depressed. She didn't quite consider herself suicidal, she wrote, but she did think of self-harm. However, she wasn't ready to leave her teammates and the game entirely, she realized.

"Walking away from the game, I couldn't even imagine walking away from my team," she says now, in her senior year and serving as a student assistant, attending every practice and working closely with her coaches.

Forman's blog post was a release of emotions for her — and an inspiration

and a catalyst for those around her, especially her teammates.

"I think Katie Forman is the biggest advocate on our team for mental health by far," says Jasmyne Ward, a junior midfielder. "She's someone that's always made a point to bring it up in the best way possible."

With a big boost from Forman and *The Sideline Perspective's* founder, Mackenzie St. Onge '17, a former Dartmouth ice hockey and rugby player, the women's lacrosse team is using its extended time off the field due to the COVID-19 pandemic to shore up its conversations about mental health: everything from embracing their inner non-athletes to expressing the very real disappointment over losing the better part of two seasons. The willingness to talk about sensitive subjects is a model that could spread to other teams on

## COVER STORY

campus and beyond.

"I think what women's lacrosse has really done a nice job of, when you think about mental health or even in terms of sport and performance, is creating an environment where there's high levels of challenges," says Mark Hiatt, a sport psychologist for Dartmouth's Peak Performance Program (DP2). "These athletes are challenging themselves every day, but there's also a high level of support. That's when you really facilitate growth."

\*\*\*

While in college, 39 percent of students experience a significant mental health issue, according to Active Minds, a national nonprofit supporting mental health awareness and education for young adults. Athletes are no exception.

The pandemic, of course, hasn't made maintaining good mental health any easier for students (or anyone, for that matter). Two NCAA surveys, in spring and fall 2020, reported that the rates of mental health concerns among athletes in the month before the survey had been 1.5 to two times higher than the mental health concerns typically reported by athletes pre-pandemic. Athletes of color, in particular, had high rates of mental health concerns.

When the coronavirus first hit the U.S. hard in March 2020 and the Ivy League, like other conferences and schools, shut down both sports and in-person learning, academics, friendships, practices and group dinners were thrown off.

"All the barriers that exist now to all those rituals and connections that were there before have really added to that stress," Hiatt says. "Not to mention training and not having access to those resources — all that adds stress."

Through it all, without the comforts and daily routines of their sports, athletes are expected to stay "mentally tough," rather than revealing vulnerability and getting honest with one another — and their coaches — about any feelings of distress. Even while dealing with the struggles of being sidelined

“  
*It's 2021. Mental health is finally being taken seriously. Mental health is finally being put on the forefront and treated like a true injury.*  
”

- Katie Forman '21

for their second season in a row, the women's lacrosse team is working to fight that stereotype.

"It's 2021. Mental health is finally being taken seriously," Forman says. "Mental health is finally being put on the forefront and treated like a true injury."

Adds St. Onge: "Seven years ago, when I was a freshman, this was not a part of the conversation. There was shame around admitting you were going through anything. It was a weakness."

On top of the barriers that athlete stereotypes present, due to Dartmouth's rules, just 16 of coach Alex Frank's 36 rostered players are on campus and able to practice during the term, which makes staying connected and having honest conversations on any subject even tougher. They risk having players being "Zoomed out," Frank says.

Yet this quarter, the team has made it a point, on top of weekly film sessions and hangouts, to host regular discussions around issues that matter to them. In the fall, following a summer that saw the assaults of George Floyd and Jacob Blake by police, both Black

men, the topic was racial injustice. Now, it's mental health.

"We use this time to learn things that we may not have in the past," Frank says. "I think it showed me how important it is to continue this, whether we're in a pandemic or not."

\*\*\*

Two years before the pandemic, there was trouble in paradise for St. Onge. Playing rugby in Honolulu after graduation, everything was going smoothly until she broke her collarbone on a team trip to a Las Vegas tournament in March 2018. Sidelined without sports, she asked herself questions like: What's my purpose? Who am I?

But St. Onge's mental health had been tested in major ways twice before: with her feelings of grief after the death of a friend her freshman year of college, as well as with her experience with orthorexia, an eating disorder that involves an obsession with healthy

eating. She already knew the value of therapy and a great support system. So she was determined to get through this new challenge.

As St. Onge faced the possibility of her own retirement from competitive sport, that's when the idea came to her for *The Sideline Perspective*, a blog and podcast series featuring stories from dozens of athletes so far like Forman who were, well, sidelined: due to injury, retirement, COVID-19 or otherwise.

"You feel like a nobody, and all of a sudden there's no coach to say, 'Hey, to reach this goal do X, Y, Z.' You're on your own," St. Onge says. "I wanted to help people take their blinders off and see we're all kind of walking this path, and we may think we're alone, but if we open our eyes and we look to our left, to our right, we can see that other people are sharing these experiences."

Hiatt says resources like *The Sideline Perspective* are invaluable for showing athletes they're not alone and encouraging them to seek help. For Forman, contributing her own story of the mental and physical toll concussions took on her was a relief.

"It definitely felt like a weight was lifted off my chest," she says. "It felt like I was able to put that behind me, which was nice, like I was able to close that chapter of my story."

At Forman's recommendation, Frank reached out to St. Onge to see what



The recruiting visit of Nina Nesselbush '23 was made possible by the generosity of Jerome Goldstein '54 and Hugh Johnson '62 through the Dartmouth Athletic Sponsors program.



## COVER STORY

else her team could learn about mental health, beyond just Forman's own blog post. St. Onge responded by offering a series of three workshops to the team in January designed to get players and coaches alike thinking and talking about their own experiences and challenges related to mental health.

The sessions, complete with a workbook for each participant and heavy on small-group discussions, were based on St. Onge's framework for dealing with any mental health setback, which she calls "RISE" for short: reframe the story, identify your role on the team, stay connected with your support system and embrace the process by celebrating the little wins, one day at a time.

"So if we're looking at a challenge and our current inner voice says, 'I can't,' 'I don't know how,' etc., can we shift that to 'I've done something hard before,' 'I can take this day by day,' 'I will show up with my best, and that's good enough?'" she asks. "And break it into something that is empowering."

Exercises St. Onge had the team do included writing down who they've been staying connected to during the pandemic, turning the negatives of

being sidelined into positives that come from it and focusing on tangible goals. They also, in the second session, talked in-depth about each of their roles on the team — not from an X's and O's perspective, but from a human perspective, whether you're the star scoring the most goals on the team or the last sub off the bench.

The fact that St. Onge has been in the athletes' shoes so recently helps her lessons sink in.

"I think that hearing someone who's been through the same program and same school as you definitely helps, because it makes you aware that when you are struggling with your workload or something, other people have been in that same situation and they know what to do," says sophomore midfielder Nina Nesselbush. "Their advice just feels more valuable when they've been through the same exact thing as you."

\*\*\*

With all the dialogue the women's lacrosse team is having around mental health — including who their support systems are, the impact the pandemic has had on them and what it's like forgoing their sport, even temporarily — what outcomes can they expect? Off the field, the players feel more

comfortable talking to each other, their coaches and their larger support networks about any challenges that may come up, while sidelined or otherwise. That Frank has been so involved in arranging and endorsing the workshops and ensuing discussions means the lessons are more likely to stick.

"It's so important that our coach is the one having these conversations," Nesselbush says. "It's not coming just from our school. It's coming from the person we're trying to impress when we come on the field."

Once the team finally returns to the field, the players' openness about mental health is likely to pay dividends, as well. They now better understand each other's quirks, when someone is having a bad day and how that affects their play, Ward says.

"I think that on sports teams when you're a close team, you honestly play better together, for sure. When I was growing up, when I felt closer to a team, you just build off each other's energy and you feel more connected to people," Nesselbush adds. "When you're closer together you just are constantly building each other up and rooting for each other, which just makes you a stronger force on the field."

Forman points out that defeats and



[www.TheSidelinePerspective.com](http://www.TheSidelinePerspective.com)



Mackenzie St. Onge '17



setbacks are all but a guarantee in competition, but that a mentality built around sharing mental health challenges to overcome them together is likely to help in those situations.

"Great wins always come with tough losses," she says. "I hope the mental toughness we gain from having a very open conversation about mental health will help us recover faster from those losses."

Mental toughness may not always be the best term, Hiatt says, because, again, it can perpetuate the stereotype that athletes can't talk about their problems, but "psychological flexibility" and "resilience" are good substitutes. That mentality is something Hiatt and others would like to see spread to other teams.

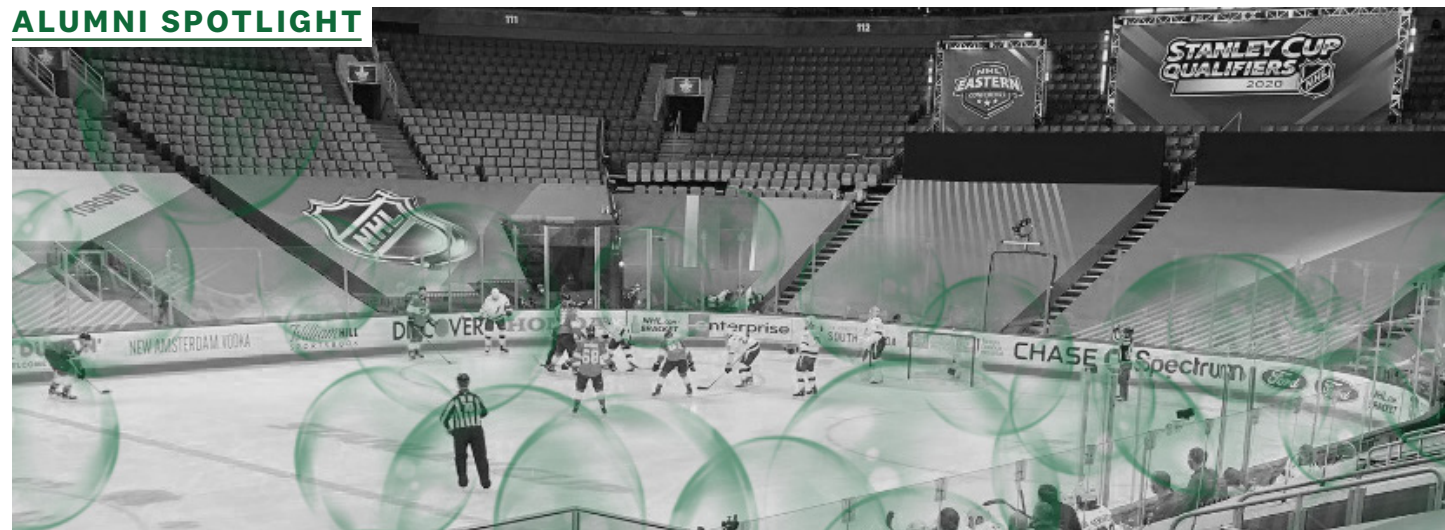
"We definitely wanted to spark discussion more and just make it more available in helping normalize it not just on our team, but through athletics at Dartmouth and on campus as well," Ward says.

The team motto is "Welcome to the Woods," which emphasizes the gritty attitude that its opponents are bound to encounter. "Even if we lose, you'll have felt us," Forman says. It's a slogan that she loves, but with one key footnote.

"I think our team culture is also shifting and our program is also shifting and understanding that we can be the grittiest team on any given Saturday, and we can be the grittiest team out there, but if we have teammates who can't happen to get there because they're kind of struggling right now, that's okay, and you know what? We're going to pick them up, too. I think that's an asterisk that we put on our gritty nature."

*Julie Kliegman is Sports Illustrated's copy chief. Her work has also been published in The Washington Post, The Ringer, BuzzFeed, Vulture, The Verge, Vox and elsewhere.*





# BUBBLE (DIDN'T) BURST

Bill Daly '86 was a major reason the NHL was able to save its 2019-20 season with two Bubble cities.

by Pat McBride

So much has been written about the execution of professional sports in the middle of COVID and the major professional sports franchises have pulled it off with varying levels of success, all of which is subjective based on an individual's passion for the sport and personal attitude toward the pandemic. The NBA had its early hiccups last summer before things smoothed out right through the playoffs. Major League Baseball also had its own issues early on and perhaps its most controversial on the same night it crowned a champion back in the fall. The NFL moved forward, despite multiple issues related to a rise in cases throughout the country and weekly occurrences within its teams.

The National Hockey League (NHL), however, can claim victory with a below-the-radar status relative to its peers. From August 1 until the end of September, the NHL staged 130 games in 59 days – and most importantly, administered over 33,000 COVID tests without a single positive result. At the center of the planning and execution of the flawless playoffs was NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly '86. As he's done before, Daly has once again saved the NHL.

Unlike his role in labor negotiations previously, this effort was truly new territory. It started with a collaborative approach between the NHL Players'

“I consider my Dartmouth experience to have been very instrumental in my later career path, in terms of commitment, determination, time management, relationship building and, perhaps most importantly, pursuit of your passion.”

- Bill Daly '86

Association and the league office, an increasingly less common occurrence in the current professional sports environment. Using a pair of hub cities – Edmonton and Toronto – the successful

execution began with unilateral support for mask wearing, social distancing and, in the case of players and team personnel, isolation from family and friends for over two months.

“I was part of a relatively small core group that worked through the numerous and varied COVID-related issues that not only faced our sport, but virtually every industry,” said Daly. “I met with my team regularly and we worked through various phases of protocol that were necessary to execute our Return to Play plan.”

“It was a unique experience and our efforts were successful – at least relatively speaking. But it's not something I ever want to have to repeat.”

Daly was also quick to deflect credit to the league, recognizing that without a collaborative effort, success would have been impossible.

“The protocols we developed were sound, well thought out and practical,” said Daly. “But they were successful only because of the buy-in we got from our constituents. The real credit goes to our players, the club staffs and our league staff, each of whom made incredible personal sacrifices to make the plan a success.”

Current Koenig Family Head Coach of Dartmouth Men's Hockey Reid Cashman had an opportunity to experience things firsthand, as he returned to his post as an assistant coach with the Washington



Daly presents Tampa Bay captain Steven Stamkos with the President's Trophy as the league's best regular-season team in 2019 (left).

Capitals for the playoff run before turning his focus back to the Big Green. Cashman could not have been more impressed with the plan and its execution.

“The league made it really easy for us to do our job in the Bubble,” said Cashman, who was situated in one of two bubbles in Toronto for the restart of the season. “It was so well organized and everything we needed to succeed – from testing to nutrition to meeting space to video – was available to us. The league gave us all the resources we needed to do our job and stay focused on the Stanley Cup.”

Reflective of the comprehensive nature of the program, there were very few and minor instances of non-compliance, according to Daly, and each of those were dealt with appropriately and, with very few exceptions, were non-recurring.

“I found that there was very little policing that needed to be done, at least within our team,” said Cashman. “We had everything we needed and because of the opportunity to play for and win the Stanley Cup, there was enough motivation for players and no reason to break protocol or put themselves or their teammates at risk.”

As the US and Canada worked through the various challenges in day-to-day life, what was happening in the NHL was having a much larger impact on society. The ability to watch sporting events again, and know they were happening in a safe environment, gave hockey fans a respite from the difficult and unpleasant effects of the pandemic on everyday life. TV viewership was up – a clear indication that the NHL's efforts to play were appreciated.

“I think it was important to our fans that we made every effort to finish our

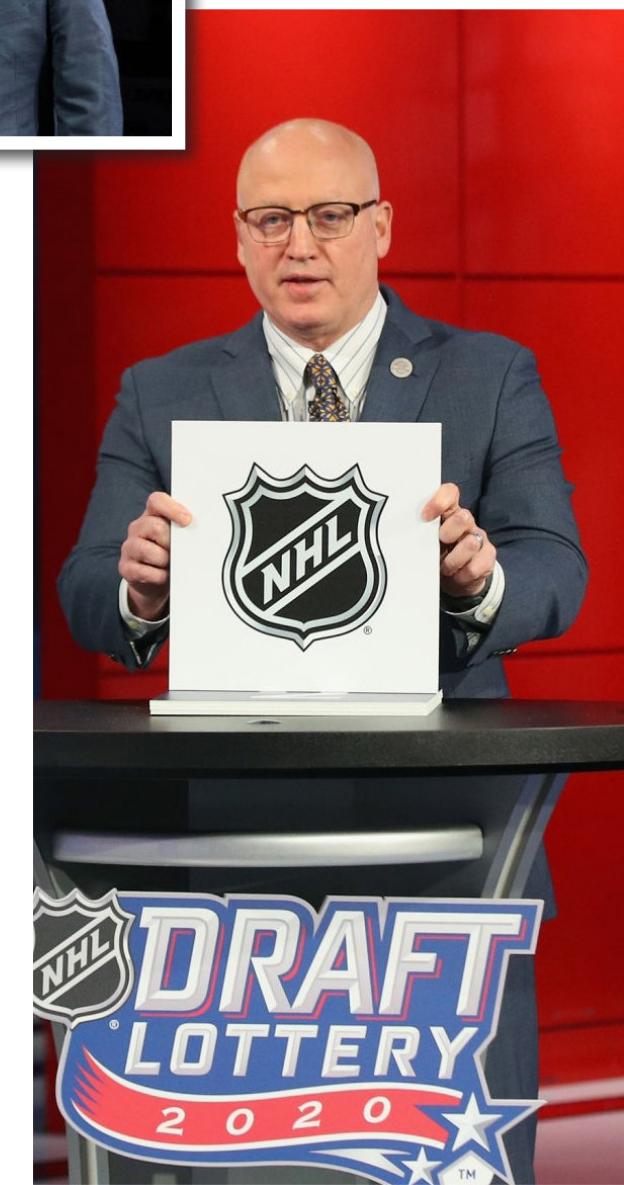
season after five-plus months of regular-season play under our belts (October to mid-March),” said Daly. “We felt we owed it to our fans to make that effort, and to make it in a safe and responsible way, but also to create a format that would produce a competitively credible and entertaining end to the season. And we think we had success in doing that.”

A 2-0 victory for the Tampa Bay Lightning over the Dallas Stars on September 28 capped an impressive two-month effort by the league and one that was lauded worldwide. While the Lightning players celebrated their Stanley Cup victory in more modest fashion than previous winners, the reward for Daly was much different – a chance to shift gears quickly and begin work on a 2021 season that started on January 13.

“The start of the 2021 season was a completely different challenge, one which required a completely different solution,” said Daly. “We set out with a goal to start playing hockey again in January and we did that, the outcome a product of intensive discussions with our players and the NHLPA.”

Not surprisingly, the second effort appears to be just as smooth as the first, and hockey fans worldwide can thank Daly's leadership in providing that. More than 30 years later, Daly still finds himself drawing on the lessons he learned on the gridiron at Dartmouth to inform decisions made in hockey venues across North America.

“I consider my Dartmouth experience to have been very instrumental in my later career path, in terms of commitment, determination, time management, relationship building and,



Daly at the NHL Entry Draft Lottery, announcing the order for last fall's picks (below).

perhaps most importantly, pursuit of your passion,” said Daly. “Sports has always been a passion of mine.”

Fortunately for millions of fans, that passion and those lessons are now guiding the NHL season through another successful campaign and giving the NHL another reason to make its fellow pro leagues a bit jealous.



## BOUNCING BACK

An injury ended Dawson McCartney's time at Dartmouth, but through hard work and the help of some of DP2's finest, he is back on the pitch and ready for the next step.

by Pat McBride

The start of Dawson McCartney's career as a member of the Dartmouth men's soccer team could not have been more promising. Unfortunately, the ending was equally as disappointing.

McCartney's career that began with a starting assignment as a freshman and Ivy League Rookie of the Year honors following a two-goal, eight-assist season as part of team that captured an Ancient Eight title and a berth in the second round of the NCAA Tournament. A talented, two-way player in the midfield, McCartney was a stabilizing force on the field and part of a foundation to build upon a string of four-straight NCAA appearances.

After the 2018 season, then-head coach Chad Riley departed for Notre Dame and Bo Oshoniyi arrived. McCartney's performance led to All-Ivy honors in 2018 and 2019 as Oshoniyi worked to rebuild the program and return to postseason play after promising performances in each of his first two years.

It was during the 2019 season when McCartney suffered a knee injury that impacted his team's performance and put his future in question. A torn lateral meniscus midway through his junior fall presented McCartney a challenging

decision — undergo surgery and miss the remainder of the season or play through it and push the surgery off until the winter. McCartney chose the latter and returned to the field after a month away, missing four contests, but returning for the final two.

A decision to delay surgery is not an easy one, but McCartney was fortunate to not make the decision alone. Working closely with athletic trainer Kate McDavitt and the DP2 team, McCartney felt the best course of action was to try and get back on the field, finish the season and then dive into surgery and rehab during the winter.

"I felt like I was supported really well from the minute the injury happened," said McCartney. "I was able to see a doctor quickly, get an MRI and once I received the diagnosis, the medical team explained both sides of the decision, but left it to me to make it. I really appreciated the way it was handled."

Following off-season surgery, McCartney attacked his rehabilitation process with the same focus and energy that he displayed on the field. Despite being away from campus for surgery

and the first phase of rehab, he continued to appreciate the support.

"Katie (Davitt) was extremely helpful and did a great job communicating with the medical team and supporting me with exercises that allowed me to progress pretty quickly. Once I returned to campus, I was able to get into the training room every day and work with her or a member of the athletic training team, which made a huge difference."

While disappointed that his star player was injured, Oshoniyi saw a silver lining to the experience that will pay dividends in the future.

"I thought Dawson handled (the injury) the way you'd want any student-athlete to attack it," said Oshoniyi. "He never felt sorry for himself and was incredibly focused. To be honest, our biggest challenge was holding him back; if he had his way, he would have been back on the field much sooner, which I think just speaks to his love of soccer and commitment to the team."

Oshoniyi was equally impressed with the way McCartney carried himself during the process, the continuation of a challenge that was issued before his sophomore season.

"In our program, we talk about leaving a legacy, and Dawson's legacy is going to be really special," said Oshoniyi. "One area that we wanted him to work on his was his integration into the team. Dawson took that challenge and ran with it, transitioning from being not only a great player, but also being a great teammate and leader."

That growth was on full display during his rehabilitation process, as McCartney continued to lead, according to Oshoniyi. He was meticulous and committed to his rehab, but also engaged other injured players and supported those who remained on the field.

"The injury and recovery process helped me become a more mature person and a better person on and off the field," said McCartney. "I started to really appreciate the sense of community at Dartmouth and the way everyone leans on each other for support, as well as just how much support there is for the student-athletes."

Despite being unable to return to the field for unfinished business this past fall, McCartney's reputation as a player spoke volumes — so much so that the Portland Timbers of Major League Soccer made him the 43rd overall pick in the 2021 MLS draft. When the Atlantic

Coast Conference (ACC) decided to move its soccer season from last fall to the spring of 2021, McCartney made the difficult decision to transfer to Notre Dame for his final season before heading to Portland to embark on his pro career.

"Notre Dame is a great fit because Chad (Riley) and the other coaches there know him really well," said Oshoniyi. "When he does find himself in Portland, I think he's going to take off. I'm close with the staff at Portland and they are excited. Dawson has the right mindset to play at that level, and we know he will push himself and be prepared for that opportunity."

Sometimes, there are silver linings to unfortunate moments. In the case of McCartney, while he did not have the chance to finish his career at

Dartmouth, his injury did advance his process to gain perspective on the experience he did have as a member of the program.

"I always had the ultimate goal of leveraging college soccer into a professional career and Dartmouth gave me the chance to do that," said McCartney. "I also know that without the support I received during my surgery and recovery process, I would not have been able to continue on that path, so I am extremely grateful for what the athletic trainers and everyone in DP2 did for me."

"I absolutely loved my three years in Hanover and playing for both coaches. It has always been about playing a game I love with people I loved playing it with, and that was the case every time I stepped on the field."

The recruiting visit of Dawson McCartney '21 was made possible by the generosity of Jean & Robert Adnopolz '54 DP and James Cruikshank '68 through the Dartmouth Athletic Sponsors program.

“He never felt sorry for himself and was incredibly focused. To be honest, our biggest challenge was holding him back; if he had his way, he would have been back on the field much sooner, which I think just speaks to his love of soccer and commitment to the team.”

- Bo Oshoniyi

”



## A DAY IN THE LIFE

With Amelija Swaffer-Selff of women's tennis and Tanner Cross of football

by Pat McBride

## AMELIJA SWAFFER-SELFF '24

**A**melija Swaffer-Selff's 'arrival' at Dartmouth happened in the most unconventional way – at home in her childhood bedroom back in Moura, Australia, a day's drive shy of 10,000 miles from campus. After enduring a fall at home, managing a 15-hour time difference and a remote integration into Ivy League academics, Swaffer-Selff finally found herself in Hanover for the winter term, grateful for the opportunity to finally experience some semblance of life as a college student.

"The hardest part of the fall was the crazy hours," said Swaffer-Selff. "Academically, I found a way to make it work. The tennis aspect wasn't ideal, but I was able to keep my normal routine. Being tired from the time difference of classes added an unexpected element, though."

Overcoming those challenges prepared Swaffer-Selff well for the hurdles she would face in her journey to Hanover.

Shortly before her planned flight to the US, Australia shut its borders and she was unable to get a visa. Fortunately, the state borders opened; however, by early January they were shut again so she made the decision to leave in late November and was fortunate to travel before the second shutdown.

"I was excited to finally be heading to Dartmouth, but saying goodbye and leaving home so quickly was really hard," said Swaffer-Selff. "While I was on the plane to Brisbane, the flight attendant announced that the borders were closing, which basically meant we couldn't go back. At that point, it really hit me that I was heading to someplace new and didn't know when I would next be able to see my family."

Swaffer-Selff spent the first few nights in a hotel before transitioning into residential life, knowing she was here indefinitely given the restrictions back home. The decision to come to campus included a bit of a risk, given that she was not guaranteed housing for the spring, but has felt well supported by the Office of Residential Life and DP2 since settling on campus.

Since arriving, Swaffer-Selff has settled into a routine that includes on-line classes, more traditional training and immersion into a campus environment that was so appealing during the recruiting process. While her time at Dartmouth has been short of normal, it does provide a glimpse into how special the experience will be.

"It has been fun so far, in the sense of being around and getting to know people," said Swaffer-Selff.

Despite there only being four women's tennis players



on campus during winter term, Swaffer-Selff has quickly discovered a sense of community.

"It was easier to connect and make friends than I expected. As I've gotten to know people and walk around campus, it's comforting to see people I know, and it shows how welcoming it is at Dartmouth."

Following the initial quarantine period, Swaffer-Selff started to find her groove with campus life. In addition to her online class schedule, she has been able to hit a few hours a day, lift five days a week and has been engaging in team and DP2 programming as much as possible. The biggest adjustment? Playing tennis indoors, which simply does not happen in Australia.

A typical day for Swaffer-Selff includes a morning lift from 9-10 a.m., followed by classes until noon, a quick bite for lunch, then studying for a couple of hours before heading into the Boss Tennis Center for practice from 3-5 p.m., another meal on campus, more studying and a bit of intra-dorm socializing. And, when possible, a call home to connect with family.

"The timing makes it hard," said Swaffer-Selff. "It's also weird when we talk because we are not at the same point in our days, regardless of when we talk. Calling regularly has allowed me to stay connected and for my parents to know I'm okay, which has allowed me to avoid being homesick."

Hopeful to head home this summer, Swaffer-Selff is also displaying maturity beyond her years by exploring potential backup plans around internships or research opportunities in the US. All of this while anxiously waiting for her chance to begin her collegiate tennis career.

"Tennis has been going quite well," said Swaffer-Selff. "I was initially worried about being able to juggle everything, but the coaching staff, my teammates and all the support I've received has been amazing."

## TANNER CROSS '21

**A**n important member of the special teams unit and linebacking corps on the Ivy League champion Big Green in 2019, Tanner Cross had the world in the palm of his hands heading into his senior season. Following an academic break during the winter term in early 2020, Cross planned to return to campus in March for his final spring football season, planning to compete for a starting job last fall – and a full-time position with the Capital Group waiting for him upon graduation.

The football program's motto — 'Adjust and Improve' — was put to the ultimate test once the pandemic hit.

Instead of enjoying spring in Hanover, Cross found himself back in Fort Smith, Arkansas, last spring, doing the best he could to stay in shape and manage the new reality of a remote-learning environment. With the hope of a fall sports season, Cross and his teammates worked out through the spring and summer in preparation for the fall season until that plan, too, was changed.

"(Holekamp Family Director of Strength & Conditioning) Spencer Brown provided us with workouts through an app called Team Builder. Our team is basically broken into four subgroups in training, so we used that structure to keep the competitive nature going even though we were spread out across the entire country," said Cross. "We had our workout routines and weekly challenges, which included things like sending in videos showing the ways we were working out and being creative around that."

Once news broke that fall sports would not be played, Cross and his teammates were devastated, and he admitted that, while it was hard at first to lock in and focus, the support he received from Robert L. Blackman Head Football Coach Buddy Teevens and the coaching staff helped tremendously. "Coach Teevens was pretty sure we'd be able to come back and play a fifth season, so we had a long-term goal in sight that we could all focus on," explained Cross. "The preparation for the 2021 season started this past fall and kept us all motivated."

Back on campus, Cross admits that the vibe was different within the football program, if only because the normal flow of the season was disrupted and just two classes of players were on campus – freshmen and seniors. He found it strange to watch the freshmen arrive and not have the true Dartmouth football experience and all that comes with the hard work and camaraderie of training camp. That said, he and his teammates who spent the fall term on campus were grateful for the opportunity.

"We talked about it a lot; the practices were the best part of our day and the most normal thing we did all fall," said Cross. "The social restrictions in practice were present, but we were able to go through things and be together, which provided a nice distraction from how messed up things were all around us. The remote learning wasn't so taboo in the fall and went a lot more flawlessly than in the spring."

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays meant an early start to the day, around 6 a.m., with a team lift in Floren Varsity House, followed by a quick breakfast at FOCO and virtual classes through mid-afternoon. Following some down time, studying and dinner, it was back on the computer for virtual team meetings to review film, talk about the previous day's practice and plan for the next one. On alternate days (excluding Sunday), things started a bit later because of practice, which ran from 4-6 p.m., followed by dinner and more team meetings. Tucked in and around all the activities were study sessions and programming with DP2 staff and coaches.

For Cross and his fellow seniors, there was an added layer to the process and one important question which needed to be answered: Was it time to move on from Dartmouth and college football or should they come back for a fifth year?

For Cross, the decision was easy, and the process was certainly worth the effort.

"After talking to the coaches about the possibility, it was reassuring to know they wanted me to come back," said Cross. "It just felt right to finish what I started."

Easier said than done. Cross had to consider his future as well and the job offer he had secured with help from Brendan Mahoney '91. Fortunately, Cross was able to shift into a summer internship and, following a reassuring conversation with Mahoney, the path was clear.

"Brendan helped me realize how special it is to play college football at a place like Dartmouth and how important it is to take advantage of the opportunity to go back one more time to be with my teammates and friends. He explained that I'll have 40 years to work, but that another year of college football was too precious to give up."

Entering the 2021 season with a clear mind and sense of purpose, Cross can't wait to get back on the field, and when he does, it will be with a new perspective. In addition to sharpening his problem-solving skills, he feels like he has learned a greater sense of accountability because of the pandemic and pause in his athletic career.

"I am so much more motivated now to wake up every day and put in the work, knowing that everyone on the team is counting on each other to be ready to go in the fall," said Cross. "We know we go into next season still the defending champions, and that brings a sense of urgency for all of us who are thankful for the chance to play another season. We are all doing the best we can to prepare, get better each day while keeping our foot on the gas pedal."

Cross also knows he and his teammates wouldn't have gotten through this without the support system in place at Dartmouth. He was quick to cite not only his coaches, but Ben Schuler and Alyssa Schramm in athletic training, Lyndsey Ostler in academics and Jen Chuks in career planning for the role they played in making the past 12 months as smooth as possible.

"I want to use my knowledge and experience to help the younger guys," said Cross. "My coaches and everyone in DP2 have helped me so much, and now I'm in a position to help others. With all the unprecedented circumstances we faced, I had a chance to really appreciate how many people are looking out for us and it makes me thankful to be at a place like Dartmouth."



The recruiting visit of Tanner Cross '21 was made possible by the generosity of Barbara and Brad Evans '64 DP and Dartmouth Class of 1977 through the Dartmouth Athletic Sponsors program.



## FEATURE

# MENTOR MOMENTUM

Former players providing current student-athletes guidance and mentorship.

by Pat McBride

Over the past 12 months, the unique environment in athletics and the inability to train and compete in traditional ways affected not only the student-athletes, but the staff as well. The focus for DP2 has always been on holistic support of the student-athletes but the pandemic presented a unique challenge – how can DP2 continue to support the student-athletes in a way that will never compensate for the loss of competition but perhaps diminish it in some way?

One solution was to increase the prominence of the alumni mentorship programming.

The programs, which pair student-athletes with alumni ‘mentors’ in their respective sports, were taking place in various ways across varsity programs. But the organic nature of the efforts, coupled with the lack of connection back to the greater mission of DP2, presented an opportunity that was already forming in another area of athletics.

Through her work in external relations, Associate AD Lori McBride was beginning to engage in alumni-mentor partnering at a time when the need for student-athlete connection was growing in significance by the day. This provided an opportunity to strengthen the alumni mentorship programming and align it even more seamlessly with DP2 and, specifically, the career networking efforts under the leadership of Jen Chuks, Associate AD for Varsity Sports and Peak Performance.

“In my work with the various Friends groups on events, it was clear that alumni sought a deeper connection with the student-athletes they were meeting,” said McBride. “In external relations, we are always looking for ways to build relationships and deepen engagement, so providing some modest support to alumni mentor programs was a natural fit.”

Through the spring and into the summer, it became clear that these programs were as important as ever.

“Everyone was looking for a connection point and the alumni felt this incredible urge to help,” said McBride. “The programs that were already in place wanted to do more, and those that were in the planning stages wanted to move quickly. The common goal was centered on ensuring that the student-athletes had people they could talk to that – while away from campus – understood the student-athlete experience and the challenges that developed quickly because of the pandemic.”

The work that continued through the summer and into the fall created a sport-specific support group of sorts with a roster of alumni mentors ready to help in any way they could. For some, it was simply lending an ear while for others, it was guiding decisions on majors, mapping an academic path, navigating social life and helping with internships and career advice.

“Every time we had a call, I was so impressed by the resolve and commitment of the alumni and their unwavering commitment to the student-athletes,” said McBride. “The exchange of ideas and different ways our alumni stepped forward to help has become a major aspect of the overall support for student-athletes during this time.”

For Katie (Horner) Van Asch ’12, her interest in becoming a mentor harkens back to her early days as an undergraduate at Dartmouth and realizing the impact this program could have had on her assimilation.

“I started mentoring players on the women’s ice hockey team because I struggled my freshman fall with a lot of issues I felt too embarrassed to admit to my teammates, coaches or parents,” said Van Asch. “I didn’t want to seem weak or ignorant, so I struggled through some big issues on my own. Looking back it would have been really helpful to have someone who knew what I was going through, so I decided to start a mentor program for those who wanted someone to help them navigate life at Dartmouth and beyond as well.”

With Van Asch’s leadership, the program has become a model at Dartmouth and continues to provide critical support for the student-athletes beyond the ice, as well as great connection points as they begin to think about their post-college life.

“I want student-athletes to know they are a part of something bigger than just their team,” said Van Asch. “The network Dartmouth provides after you leave Hanover is incredibly supportive. Ultimately, we want to provide insight and guidance to student-athletes in any avenue where they are uncertain about what to do next.”

The current women’s ice hockey model includes an initial meeting over Zoom and from there, the mentor and mentee work together to create a communication plan that works best for them. Van Asch and her mentee, Sara McClanahan ’22, who share Minnesota roots, text regularly, set up times to talk by phone and meet up in person for dog walks when home.

“The emotional and mental health needs have become very apparent during the pandemic for everyone, not just student-athletes,” added Van Asch. “I think access to sport psychologist and therapists through the DP2 program is extremely valuable and I hope student athletes are taking advantage of these services. I also think our mentors have done a great job assisting with tough questions around D-Plan adjustments, fifth-year extensions, virtual interview prep and remote working environment expectations.”

**To date, more than 20 varsity teams have mentorship programs established or in development. If you are interested in becoming involved in an alumni mentorship program within your sport, or simply want to help support the student-athletes, please contact Lori McBride at [lori.mcbride@dartmouth.edu](mailto:lori.mcbride@dartmouth.edu)**

# DARTMOUTH ATHLETIC SPONSORS



## ATHLETIC SPONSORS MAKING AN IMPACT

As Athletic Sponsors, nearly 1,000 alumni, parents, and other supporters provide vital recruiting resources for all of Dartmouth’s varsity sports.

### CAMPUS VISITS

Our Athletic Sponsors are the sole source of funding for those all-important campus visits by nearly 300 top prospects annually – including high school seniors and juniors – for a first-hand view of the Dartmouth Experience.

### ACCESS

By fueling coaches’ recruiting trips to discover talented prospects far from Hanover, then funding their campus visits regardless of means, our Sponsors bring elite recruits of all socioeconomic backgrounds to Dartmouth.

### GLOBAL REACH

The sponsored recruits on our teams right now were brought to Hanover from 35 different states, Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, and the U.K.

### IMPACT

Of Dartmouth’s 139 First Team All-Ivy athletes in the last four years, 122 were recruited with crucial resources from our Athletic Sponsors – brought to Hanover on visits, seen by our coaches on the road, or both.

For more information or to become a member, call (603) 646-9744 or visit [DartmouthSports.com/Sponsors](http://DartmouthSports.com/Sponsors)



**Dartmouth Peak Performance**  
**6083 Alumni Gym**  
**Hanover, NH 03755**



**DARTMOUTH ATHLETIC**  
**SPONSORS**



*The generosity of Digger Donahue '73 provided the resources for a complete renovation of the indoor squash facility, transforming an already impressive space into one of the best in the country.*