

Lafayette College Athletics

The Finish Line: Dana Smith
Women's Lacrosse
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"Lacrosse is fun because it's hard."

By [Dana Smith](#) '18, Lafayette Women's Lacrosse



I never thought I would play Division I lacrosse.

I don't mean that to be modest, I just fell in love with soccer at age five and always assumed that would be my sport in college. My parents bought into that dream as well, taking me from my local travel soccer team to a better select club before fifth grade.

I wanted to train year-round, but at that age, soccer was contained to the summer and fall seasons, mostly. My parents stuck me in our local youth lacrosse program just so I would have something to do in the spring.

I hated it.

I quit the program and never planned on touching a lacrosse stick again. I was definitely playing soccer in college, after all.

The Finish Line

► The Finish Line, a special section of The Real Deal, is a series of first-person stories written by recently graduated student-athletes, reflecting on their Lafayette experience.



I revisited lacrosse in seventh grade, per my parents' request.

I had too much energy to sit at home after a day of middle school in the spring. I joined the middle school team and volunteered to play goalie as much as possible because then at least I wouldn't have to run. I was relieved when the spring season ended and my summer soccer tournaments began. I would forget about lacrosse until next March when I had to play for the middle school team again.

While my dad was the college athlete in my family, my mom was the one who really pushed for me to play lacrosse. She persuaded me to join a new club lacrosse team in my town, promising it would just be for six weeks in the summer, well before I had to start preseason for high school soccer.

We agreed that soccer tournaments would take priority and I left a number of lacrosse tournaments early this first summer as a two-sport athlete.



After a thrilling first season of high school soccer, March rolled around and it was time to try out for the lacrosse team.

I didn't even know what position I played, since I was used to just playing goalie/wherever else my coach put me. A friend of mine suggested I would have a better chance as a defender since my stick skills were weak and no one wanted to play defense since you don't get to score.

It worked, I made varsity. I pretended not to care since I was really a soccer player.



For the first two years of high school, I focused most of my energy on soccer and began the recruiting process, looking at a number of schools to play soccer. Somewhat reluctantly. I went to a few lacrosse recruiting camps as well, including a summer camp at Lafayette because a family friend who played here offered to drive me.

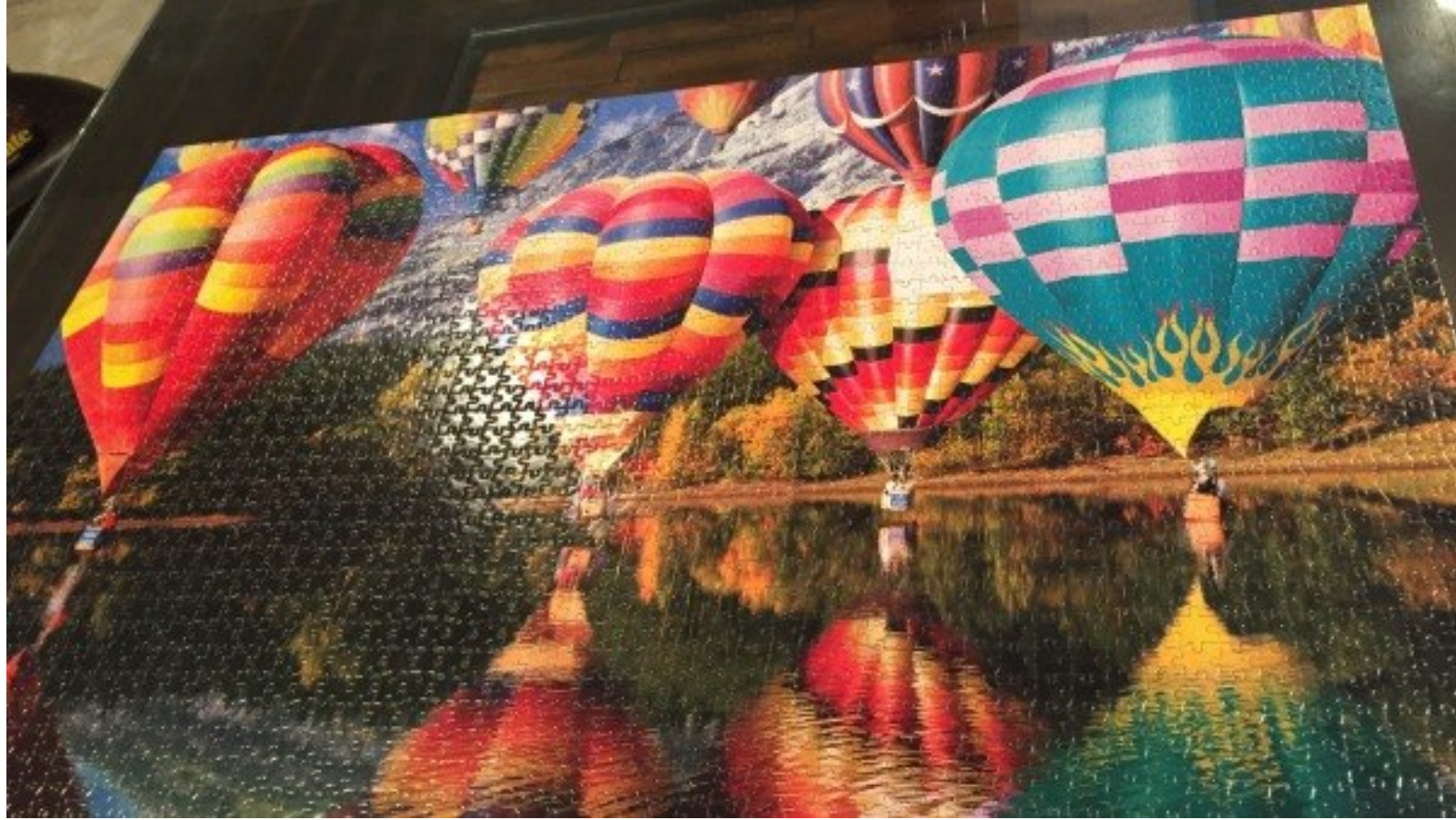
You hear plenty of stories of young athletes burning out and giving up their sport, but that didn't happen with me and soccer.

I never stopped loving soccer, but at some point, I realized lacrosse was so much fun. Sure, scoring goals is great, but ask any defender, there's nothing as exciting as drawing a charge or picking off a pass.

More...

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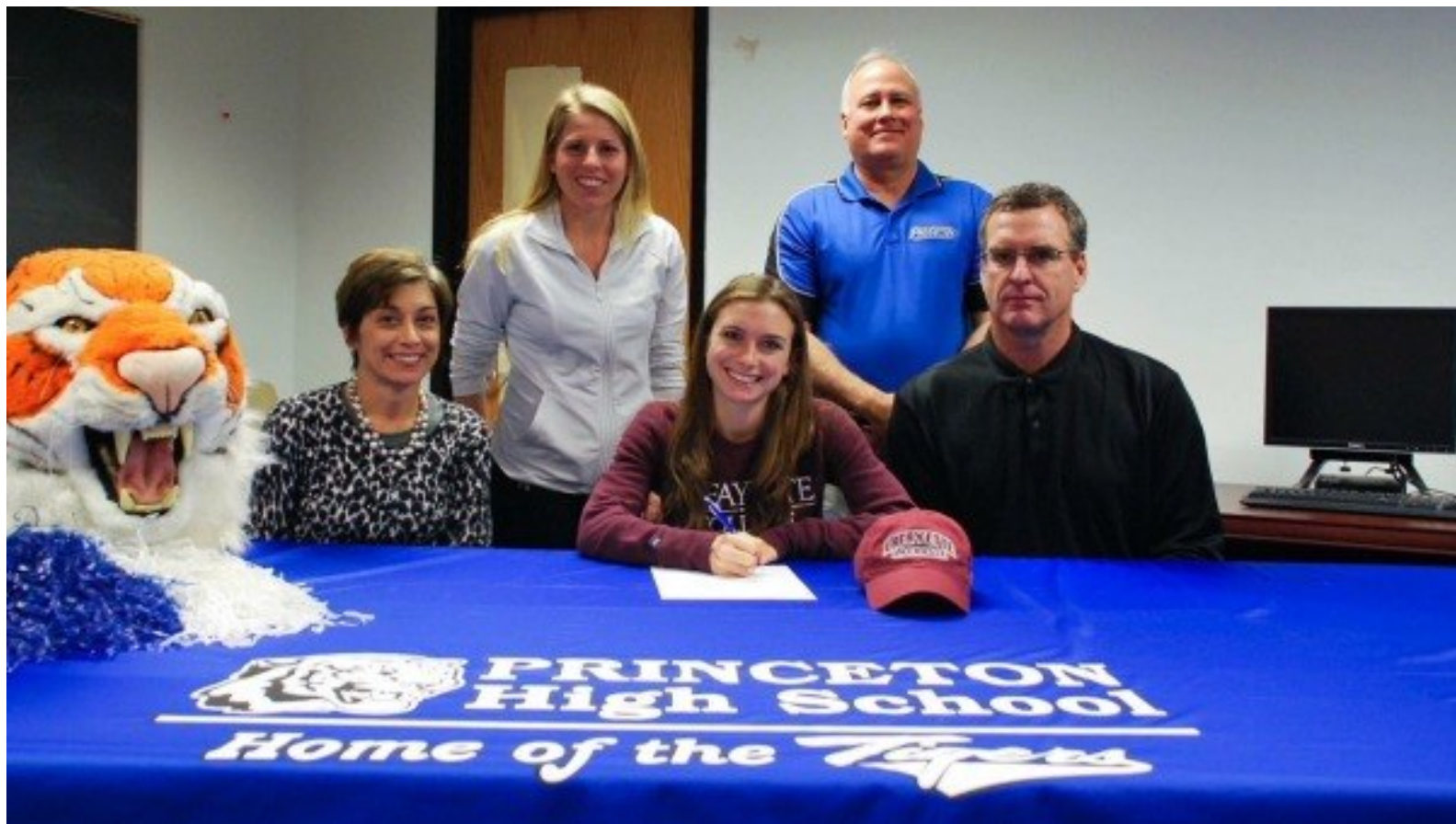


I appreciate the way lacrosse, "the fastest game on two legs," has always challenged me.

I'm short and not particularly fast, but lacrosse is also a strategic game, so I can keep up if I can see the game two steps ahead. Soccer never forced me to think the way lacrosse has and that's why I had so much fun playing.

Lacrosse is like solving a puzzle; when you finally see how it all fits together and shove that last piece in place, you feel like you've won the lottery.

Maybe that's why our team is so good at puzzles.



So I went to that one lacrosse camp at Lafayette and the rest was history? Not quite.

I toyed around with the idea of playing both soccer and lacrosse in college, or maybe playing one sport in Division III to focus on my academics. Eventually, I visited Lafayette during the semester and got a better sense of campus and classes here.

Every school I visited after that paled in comparison.

I wanted to play on Fisher Field and see my face on the big screen, and of course get a prestigious degree from the college. Before I told my parents or called Ali, I knew I was coming to Lafayette.

Four years later, I'm obviously glad I picked Lafayette, but I'm really glad I picked lacrosse.



Lacrosse has challenged me in ways I never imagined.

Playing any sport in college teaches you time management, leadership and perseverance. But Lafayette lacrosse taught me how to fail when it took me three tries to pass the run test my sophomore year, and when my senior season ended in a double-overtime loss.

It taught me to play to my strengths, but my teammates held me accountable for improving on my weaknesses. I learned to take risks, even though sometimes I'll miss the interception.

Lacrosse has shown me that, though the answer to a problem is rarely obvious, you can always find the solution with a little creative thinking.

Years ago, I felt that lacrosse was just more fun than soccer or any other sport I'd played, but I couldn't really tell you why.

Lacrosse is fun because it's hard.

You have to run fast, think fast and you're going to get scored on a lot, but every 90 seconds you have a chance to draw a charge, to score a goal, to support a teammate...

...to solve a puzzle.

Dana Luntz

