

QUICK HIT
MEET BEN
ZACHARIAS

Standing 5 feet 6 inches tall, making him one of the shortest players on the boys' varsity tennis team, freshman Ben Zacharias has managed to prove worthy of a varsity spot. Some opposing players may tower over him, but his team still welcomed him with open arms.



"Our team is very nice, and they took me in really good, but I mean, facing other teams is intimidating," Zacharias said.

Playing against older boys may be a daunting task, but luckily, Zacharias is on the team with his two older brothers, sophomore Mitchell Zacharias and senior Jacob Zacharias. In addition to helping him prepare for tryouts, they also helped him condition for the season ahead.

"I didn't know anything about a full tennis match before, but now they've taught me," Zacharias said. "I've just really hit with them this summer, and they beat me pretty bad, but it got me a lot better."

Even though his brothers whipped him into shape, Zacharias still noticed the physical differences between him and some of his opponents.

"I do feel a lot smaller because like when we played South, we played two seniors, and at Port Huron (High School) we played two seniors, so it's not that they're intimidating, just I feel like I'm really small," Zacharias said.

Although facing more seasoned players, being a member of varsity will benefit Zacharias in the future.

"It's been helping me a lot, just playing with better kids," Zacharias said. "I mean, I feel like instead of me being on JV and being one of the best, I'd rather be on varsity because I get to practice more and hit with a lot better kids, and it's just really improved my game."

By Izzy Ellery



KARINA LUCCHESI

First-time field hockey competitor Rachel Mourad grew up watching her cousin Trina Giorgio play, and started playing until this year.

First-time field hockey freshman claims spot on varsity

By Patricia Bajis & Emma Brock
EDITOR & INTERN

Freshman Rachel Mourad had never held a field hockey stick until three weeks before the start of the season. Persuaded by her cousin to give the sport a try and accompanied by her friends to tryouts, Mourad made varsity – the only freshman to earn a spot.

"I went in there with an open mind because it was a brand new sport I'd never played before, and I had no intentions of making varsity because I knew who I was up against," Mourad said.

After five days of tryouts, Coach Britney Paquette revealed the JV and varsity distinctions for the potential players.

"We were all standing around when she was reading off names of the people who made the team. She went through the varsity list first, and I was like the four last ones she said, and all my friends and I stopped, and our jaws dropped. We looked at her like she was crazy," Mourad said.

Mourad traded in her volleyball knee pads and swimsuit for field hockey goggles and stick. Paquette said that Mourad represents the "new generation" of North's field hockey team.

"She is a natural athlete, she is very coachable, she constantly asks questions, and she was very aware of her body and her positioning. She knew how to criticize her own form, and she understood that field hockey can be broken down to a very technical aspect," Paquette said. "It's not often, one, that a freshman makes varsity, two, some-

body that's never played except when you're that natural of an athlete and you're a fast learner. That is every coach's dream because essentially I can mold her into what she needs to be and start from a clean slate."

At the conclusion of tryouts, Mourad was given a choice of which team she would like to play on.

"I gave her the option to, if she wanted more playing time, to go on JV, but she wanted the experience to play with varsity, so I left it up to her. She knew that, going into this situation, that her playing time might be limited," Paquette said.

"I felt that if I went down to JV, I would get in a lot more playing time, but I didn't feel that it mattered. If I'm working with people who are above me, I feel like I need to work up to their level. That pushes me to do better, but if I'm on the same level or even (with) people below me, I won't progress," Mourad said.

Mourad says her lack of playing time this year does not affect her as she takes it as a "learning experience" for next year and works to improve her skills.

"You're never done working on something. You're always improving. I want to keep pushing myself to make varsity because nothing's guaranteed," Mourad said.

The team played crosstown rivals, South, when Mourad was pitted against one of her inspirations for starting the sport, her cousin, South junior Trina Giorgio. Though they were never on the field at the same time, Mourad said she "rubbed" their one-point victory "in her face."

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Rachel Mourad
FRESHMAN

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