



Saint Viator Lacrosse Program Nets NCAA Division I Recruit and High School Academic All American

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Connor Ptacin and Matt Barry.

After seven years of playing lacrosse, and watching the program double in size, Saint Viator officials say the club has come of age. At the end of this season, they announced the program had landed its first NCAA Division I recruit, and saw another of its seniors named a High School Academic All American.

Senior Matt Barry of Rolling Meadows made a verbal commitment last month to attend the University of Denver to play under Head Coach Bill Tierney. Tierney is considered to be one of the most successful active lacrosse coaches, having coached Princeton University to six NCAA championships.

On top of that, last week senior Connor Ptacin of Arlington Heights was named an Academic All-American

by the Illinois High School Lacrosse Association, based on his academic performance, community involvement and recommendations.

Ptacin was one of only four lacrosse Academic All-Americans named by the association this year. Ptacin also is the second straight Academic All-American from the Saint Viator team, after Brett Biondi '09 won the honor last year.

“The value of having a player earn Academic All America honors cannot be measured,” says head coach Bill Sanford. “I have nearly 100 kids in this program, and every time they walk in my office, they see those awards front and center.

“It reinforces the message to our students,” Sanford adds, “to strive for academic excellence.”

Like many of the players at Saint Viator, neither Barry nor Ptacin had ever picked up a lacrosse stick before entering high school.

Both played football and turned to lacrosse in the spring of their freshman year, but as the growing numbers in the program suggest, the game quickly hooked them.

“I like the fast pace of the game and the contact. It’s like soccer, with more physicality,” says Barry who was named as a defenseman to the 2nd All-State team, while Ptacin was honorable mention All-Conference and selected to the IHSLA senior All-Star game.

Overall, the Lions finished second in Catholic League Lacrosse Conference, and played into the round of Sweet 16 in the state tournament series before losing to Lyons Township. They wound up the year ranked 11th in the state.

“The sport of lacrosse is offering a lot to athletes like Matt and Connor,” Sanford says, “and if kids work as hard as they have, these kinds of opportunities will present themselves.”

Saint Viator officials began fielding a lacrosse team in 2003, with 40 players. They now have 90 in the program, including 35 freshmen. While they still are designated as a club, Saint Viator Athletic Director Tim Carlson expects them to become a full interscholastic sport next year.

The Lions have competed in the Mid Suburban League against Barrington, Fremd, Hoffman Estates, Schaumburg, Palatine and Conant, and won the conference the last three years.

This year, they joined the new Catholic League lacrosse conference, playing many of their rivals from the East Suburban Catholic Conference.