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Q&A with Masters Academy director Abbey Capobianco



By [Mike Zhe \(https://www.laxjournal.com/author/mikezhe/\)](https://www.laxjournal.com/author/mikezhe/)

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On Sept. 15, Masters Academy International opens its doors to student-athletes for the first time. Built on 82 acres in Stow, Mass., the academy is aiming to offer a first-class education with an elite sports experience.

Overseeing the girls lacrosse program is **Abbey Capobianco** (Framingham, Mass.). A former Division 1 player, she spent a decade as the head coach at Assumption and also coached the Boston Storm in the UWLX, the first women's professional lacrosse league.

Capobianco will coach an Upper School team (grades 9-12) next spring, with plans to develop a Middle School team and a College Prep/Elite Athletes team in the future.

We connected with Capobianco for a Q&A about lacrosse at Masters Academy, recruiting challenges, the first season and more.

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Mike Zhe: Just for you, personally, what made this position attractive?

Abbey Capobianco: Ultimately, this position tied together everything that I've done professionally. I played Division 1 lacrosse, learned a lot there, then I went right into college coaching. I was at Assumption for a good part of my 20s and 30s. Then I had an opportunity to coach professionally. And I've been really fortunate to be with Laxachusetts since the beginning. Masters Academy really ties all of that together. It was an opportunity I couldn't pass up and it just fits me perfectly.

MZ: What about the recruiting aspect of this? You did this for a long time in college. You had your recruiting calendar, what you had to see and where you had to go. At this level, how do you go about bringing in the best caliber of player that you can?

AC: I'm fortunate that I do work with Laxachusetts so I have my hand in that. We're one of the strongest programs in New England and do attend most of the elite tournaments. The only one we didn't do is Sand Storm (in Indio, Calif.). I went out to Sand Storm in January and that was my first time not recruiting college-level kids. I went with my husband; we sat and watched the 2030s for 14 hours. I had my notepad and I was so excited. We were literally going up to kids after each game, introducing ourselves to coaches.

And my time as a college coach and my time with Laxachusetts, I've made really good connections with coaches. I've been leaning on my prep school colleagues to help with that, letting me know what works for them and what doesn't. I'm more of an on-the-ground recruiter. I like to learn about players and their families, and what makes them tick, the stuff you might not see at a game.

MZ: How do you sell Masters Academy to recruits? What are you offering here, or intending to offer, that they can't get at a top prep school?

AC: The biggest thing that separates us, and I think (Masters Academy) nails it with its slogan, is greatness without compromise. I genuinely believe they get the best balance of academics and athletics that nowhere else can offer.

If you're looking at those other prep schools or considering leaving your public school, that's what you're leaving for. You have that next-level drive, desire, passion, and it's going to be my job to help unlock that and elevate it. From the second they step on campus, they're developing, growing, trusting, competing while finding that joy and getting them to the next level. That's the biggest thing that separates us, the balance between academics and athletics, and not having to give up on one or the other. I do believe that at other places you have to sacrifice a little bit of one.

MZ: What about the calendar? In college you've got fall ball and you're practicing, and then the season starts in January or February. In prep school you might finish up in May and then you pick up another sport after the summer and maybe players are not thinking about lacrosse during those seasons. What is the Masters Academy lacrosse calendar like?

AC: The fall is going to be very reminiscent of a Division 2 or Division 3 college fall, in the sense that we are going to touch our sticks pretty much every day. But we don't want to burn out. I keep sharing with recruits that I'd love to have a competition Friday, where we're taking advantage of some of the things we have here. We have incredible golf coaches. We have USA Fencing. I'm a big

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after (holiday) break, and we'll move into a traditional prep school schedule.

MZ: That leads me into my next question. Opponents? League affiliation? Who are you going to be playing?

AC: I think as our roster fills out that will help dictate exactly what our schedule's going to be. I've had some really good conversations with some close friends and (prep) colleagues who will be playing us. I'm hoping we can add a more national schedule as well. Obviously the most important thing is that we're playing competitive games. We may have to take a trip to Long Island. We may have to take a trip to New Jersey. We may go down to Maryland. Maybe to Pennsylvania to play a Penn Charter. As soon as the summer finishes I'll be able to create our final schedule.

MZ: How are you going to measure success? At Assumption, you win so many, you lose so many, you go so far in the conference tournament, you graduate your players. But in this situation, when the first year's up, what are going to be the factors that determine whether this was a success?

AC: The biggest thing when I was starting to build our roster was that it had a real high school feel. We have four freshmen, six sophomores, six juniors, some seniors and one PG. When it comes to success, I want them to feel, No. 1, so happy that they came to Masters Academy. That they loved it, that they felt like they grew, that they got better on and off the field, that they were challenged daily to be a better student, a better teammate, a better overall person. If we can all huddle up at the end of the season, and say wow, we had so much fun and we got so much better from day one, and we know who we are and we have an identity, that will be a measure of success.

And then our upperclassmen will have some (recruiting interest) on Sept. 1. Where are they going off to school? Are they landing where their hopes and dreams are? Are we helping them get to where they want to go?

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