



Mary Sieredzinski's recruiting visit to Dartmouth was made possible by the generosity of Mrs. George H. Jacobus W'53 P'81 P'96 GP'10 and Ashley D. Pace Jr. '41 through the Athletic Sponsor Program.

Redefining Leadership

Is it really possible to lead from behind?

It may sound a little oxymoronic but DP2 leadership intern Mary Sieredzinski has learned the hard way that indeed you can. And that to be a good teammate you must.

To better understand what Sieredzinski has learned let's start at the beginning.

Sieredzinski came to Dartmouth after a standout athletic career at Nease High School in Ponte Vedra, Fla. In her freshman year of high school alone she was her cross country team's Most Valuable Runner, a member of the varsity soccer team and the track team's overall points leader. Only because there weren't enough seasons in the school year wasn't she a standout on the volleyball court as well.

Before her freshman year at Nease was through Sieredzinski held the school triple jump record, had run on the 4x100 relay that also broke a school record, and advanced to states in the 200 as well as a couple of relays.

When her high school career was over the Nease senior class president also made it to states in the long jump, triple jump and 300 hurdles, and owned school records in four events. If not for an injury she likely would have led the Nease track team in points for all four years she was there. Not surprisingly, she graduated as the St. Augustine Sports Club Athlete of the Year.

Little wonder that she arrived on the Dartmouth campus expecting big things as a "multi" competitor on the Big Green track team.

"I came here thinking I was going to be the best," Sieredzinski said. "I was going to be the Heps champion. It was all or nothing."

It hasn't worked out that way. Not yet at least.

"I was ahead of the pack my freshman fall and I just really fell off and didn't understand why," she explained. "It turned out I was anemic and didn't know it."

She's also had to deal with shin splints. And with a pulled hamstring. And a rolled ankle. And more.

It's been one thing after another – to the point that in her junior spring she couldn't participate in any meets at all.

"I have been very frustrated at times," she admitted. "It has been very difficult getting hurt and not being able to compete. Or competing hurt, which may almost be worse because you are comparing yourself to a standard and coming up short."

If Sieredzinski hasn't contributed to Dartmouth's success on the scoreboard the way she expected – yet – she's found other ways to help the Big Green. She credits coach Tim Wunderlich for helping her understand how.

"I have had a lot of conversations with Coach Tim about how I am not the star athlete on my team," she said. "He's still in shape and competes with us. I was trying to understand how I could be a team leader in an individualized sport when I was struggling and he said to me, 'You know, Mary, Nico (Robinson) and Ben (Ose) pole vault higher than me. How come they still listen to what I have to say when I am coaching them? It's because even though you may not be the most gifted, people can see it when you show a strong work ethic and have positive energy.'"



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"In track it is all about setting the mentality," Sieredzinski went on. "You need upperclassman to show the way. On any team you've got your leaders, you've got your haters and you've got your sheep. The more positive energy you bring as a leader the more you bring it out in others."

Flash back to her senior year at Nease when Sieredzinski filled out a form for Dartmouth listing her various interests outside of the classroom. Among them were outdoor activities, public speaking, TV production and, yes, leadership. To that end, she has worked with Sidney Finklestein in the leadership department at the Tuck School. She also served for a year as an assistant in the college's Management and Leadership Development Program, helping DP2's Steven Spaulding and Hillary McNamee coordinate student activities.

Already familiar with her interest in leadership, Spaulding encouraged Sieredzinski to participate during her sophomore summer in DP's program that goes by the acronym DRIVE (Development, Resilience, Ingenuity, Valor and Excellence). Recognizing the value of more widespread enrollment in DRIVE, Sieredzinski soon became a program champion.

"I had done a lot of outreach for MLDP and I told Steven one day I think I have some good ideas for how to get more students involved in DRIVE, and how to increase awareness for the program," she said. "It's important because it's a great program."

Sieredzinski's key idea has been helping create a "reps" position to spread the DRIVE gospel, particularly to those on campus in their sophomore summer.

"All DRIVE graduates are eligible to be reps," she explained. "They are responsible for coordinating with the sophomores on their team, and the sophomores they know, to increase awareness of the program."

"We have about 15 DRIVE reps who wanted to commit to it. We have a little workshop meeting facilitating how to talk about DRIVE, why athletes would want to do it and the benefit of doing it."

Add it up and Sieredzinski – the high school standout who had to find a way to be a leader when things weren't going her way on the track – is finding a way to lead not just her team, but the whole lineup of Dartmouth student-athletes.

"This is all in the greater effort at building more of a leadership culture here," she said. "It is building the mentality that we are tough up here in the middle of the woods. That we have guts. We may not always be the best team, but you are going to have to give it your all to beat us."

Spoken like a true leader. **DP**