

# In a league of her own

*Joelle Sacheli stands alone as the only female on the golf team*

VIEWPOINT EDITOR  
NICOLE RUSSO

American philosopher and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

Fisher freshman Joelle Sacheli's path led her to the golf course at a young age, when she would follow her father around as he played. She quickly picked up the game and picked up her first club at the age of five.

The path led her to a stellar career with the sport in high school, when she was captain of the girls' team at Pittsford Mendon High School her senior year. During that year, she shot a low round of 35, placed third in the Section V Tournament, second in Section V's New York State qualifying tournament and earned All-County honors.

She believed the path would lead her to an out-of-state school to play Division II golf.

At least, that's the path she first and strongly considered. She reviewed offers to play and visited the interested schools. Once she did so, however, she realized that she wanted a smaller school environment.

That led her to Division III golf and to the nationally-ranked St. John Fisher College Cardinals, who won the Empire 8 Championship and earned its second consecutive NCAA berth in 2007.

"Where I'd play golf was a major factor in my college search because it is what I've done all my life," Sacheli said.

"I've worked so hard to get to where I am in my golf career and playing collegiate golf was a major factor in my decision."

There was just one minor problem.

It seemed the path reached a dead end at Fisher, as there was no established women's golf team.

Undaunted, Sacheli approached coach Bob Simms, who was receptive to the idea of coaching a female on the team. Simms directed Sacheli to athletic director Bob Ward.

Not only did Sacheli highlight her career and make a pitch to contribute to the program as part of the men's team—she discussed with Ward the possibility of her presence attracting other women to the team and eventually, if interest grew, to create a full-scale women's program.

"I told [Ward] my story and all the accomplishments I've made both on and off the golf course," Sacheli said. "I said that starting a women's program would be a great idea for the school and promote golf more throughout Rochester."

Sacheli she was "thrilled" to hear the Athletic Department would allow her to play with the men's team—the first woman in Fisher history to do so.

However, her arrival at Fisher was an obvious adjustment, as her high school team was not co-ed. She embraced the challenge, feeling that playing with the men would help her improve her own game.

She enjoyed the new experience and said the transition was smooth due to the support of her teammates—who reacted with friendship rather than scorn at the thought of a woman invading their boys' club.

"My teammates have been very helpful and supportive of me throughout the year, and they've grown to become my role models throughout the year," she said.

"I could not have asked for a better team to be on my first year of playing collegiate golf."

Sacheli, who competes as an individual, has certainly adjusted well to the college game. In her first collegiate competition, the St. Lawrence Invitational, she shot rounds of 90 and 94 to place in the top 25 among Division III women. At the McDaniel Fall Invitational in October, she carded back-to-back rounds of 86 to finish third, seven strokes out of first.

At the Nike Spring Collegiate Classic March 29 and 30, she placed second, shooting rounds of 86 and 82 for a combined 168, six strokes out of first.

"College golf is a major transition from high school golf," she said. "The competition is better, the courses are longer and the practices are more intense."

In addition to adjusting to the collegiate game, Sacheli has had to deal with the same changes as every freshman—adjusting to college life in general. That includes balancing her athletic career with the increased course load.

"Juggling school and golf has always been a priority of mine and I never let either affect my grades," Sacheli said. "I work hard day in and day out. With school, golf and work I keep myself busy."

Sacheli, however, is used to the balancing act. In addition to schoolwork and golf in high school, she dove competitively, loves to play tennis and danced for 12 years.

Adjusting to the college game, balancing the rest of her life with college coursework; typical adjustments for any freshman. But she's far from typical, as the rookie Cardinal has created her own path from nothingness.

Emerson—and female athletes everywhere—would be proud.

nmr08083@sfc.edu



Brad Waters

Freshman Joelle Sacheli is comfortable with her role on a team full of men.

## Spring Freshman Phenoms

Every sports season, the Cardinal Courier highlights freshman athletes that have shown outstanding skills at the beginning of their collegiate careers. Spring's edition of freshman phenoms includes Langevin, O'Brien, VanBuren, Clare and Rassow.



BASEBALL

**ROSS LANGEVIN**

- **Position:** Outfielder
- **Hometown:** Liverpool, N.Y.
- **Major:** Business Management
- **Coach Pepicelli says:** "His baserunning is very solid and he plays good defense. He is a kid that when you watch him you don't say 'Jeez, four years from now...' I think a lot of his potential is right here and right now."

- **Interesting Fact:** I'm an only child, graduated number 98 out of 600 students and am 100% French-Canadian.

- As of April 7, Langevin leads the team in batting average (.439) and has stolen three bases in three attempts.



SOFTBALL

**LAUREN O'BRIEN**

- **Position:** Shortstop/Outfielder
- **Hometown:** East Amherst, N.Y.
- **Major:** Business Management
- **Coach Maiorani says:** "She's got a great attitude, she does everything you ask her to do and she's just going to do a great job for us. She's the fastest kid we have on the team too."

- **Interesting Fact:** I am probably one of the few people that can say I am never on AIM, but I do spend way too much time on Facebook.

- O'Brien has started 12 out of 13 games and hit a game-winning home run against the University of Rochester on April 1.



TENNIS

**JAKE VANBUREN**

- **Position(s):** Fifth Singles Third Doubles
- **Hometown:** Canandaigua, N.Y.
- **Major:** Corporate Finance
- **Coach Gohagan says:** "He's made the transition from a high school player to a college player very well. Jake is a mature player in terms of his experience and he's a very nice kid to have on the team."

- **Interesting Fact:** I was captain of my high school golf and tennis teams junior and senior year.

- VanBuren won four straight matches from March 25 to April 2.



WOMEN'S LACROSSE

**COURTNEY CLARE**

- **Position:** Midfielder/Attacker
- **Hometown:** Camillus, N.Y.
- **Major:** Undeclared
- **Senior Jen Cardinal says:** "Courtney Clare is a strong, talented player, who is always looking to better her skills and is definitely a great asset to our team."

- **Interesting Fact:** My high school (West Genessee) lacrosse team was ranked number one in the nation.

- With eight starts out of 10 games, Clare currently ranks fourth on the team with 15 goals.

Head coach Shannon McHale declined to contribute to this feature.



MEN'S LACROSSE

**ERICH RASSOW**

- **Position:** Midfielder
- **Hometown:** Orchard Park, N.Y.
- **Major:** Business Management
- **Coach Johnson says:** "He's in a position where he can learn a little bit this year, help out a little more next year and will be taking a significant amount of face-offs for us. That's such a huge part of the game."

- **Interesting Fact:** My jersey number has been 36 my whole life after Matt Barnaby of the Buffalo Sabres.

- Rassow has won 10 of 28 face-offs.

Compiled by Chris Potter