

Dive in, Max!

By Connor Leighton



Max Wickersham, a member of the class of 2018, had a decision to make. This decision was about as big as the one LeBron had to make back in 2010. Did Max want to dive, do yoga, or jog as a winter sport? Many on the diving team were urging him to join. There was only one problem. The pretty girls in yoga and jogging weren't easy to resist; but ultimately, Max was able to and decided to jump in the pool.

Coming into the sport as a beginner, it was expected that Max would feel hesitant and nervous at first. When asked what was going through his head at his first practice, Max replied with, "No way am I going to be able to do this. Obviously it was my first time diving and I was quite nervous." He later added, "To be honest I couldn't even front dive off the diving board the first few attempts. I just kept asking myself how is Madi Perry so good."

Max practiced hard and was rewarded by being given a chance to compete in a meet. Max was not able to compete in the first few meets of the season due to the fact that divers must know how to complete a total of six different dives. Max did not take sitting out the first few meets personally. He used this time to watch and learn from many of the seasoned divers on the team. Watching others compete before him calmed the nerves quite a bit, and when it was his turn to step in, he was ready to go. Reflecting on his first meet here at Loomis, Max said, "A lot of my friends were in the stands, and of course I wanted to perform well in front of them. When you are up, everyone in the pool has their eyes on you, considering you are the only one performing at a time. Once it was my time to go I stepped onto the board and was able to block out the crowd and focus in on what I had to do to complete my dive. I ended up completing it and was very pleased with my performance."

Once out of the pool divers are able to use the hot tub to warm up before their next event. Max was able to use his time in the hot tub to meet divers from other schools and talk about their experiences as well. Being an athlete myself, I was curious to see if divers had any good "chirps" that would help in other sports. Max was unfortunately too much of a beginner to be concerned with what others thought of his diving style and "Pat was too good to be chirped."



Wickersham later added. After a long meet, Wickersham states, "Everyone is relieved when it is all said and done. Not only physically, but mentally all of the divers are drained. If I had to compare the end of a meet to a real life event I would have to say it relates to getting off a roller coaster. I could feel the adrenaline leaving my body and I couldn't be happier." This being Max's first year diving he learned many new things, as did I when he told me that concussions and whiplash are two very common injuries in the diving world.

Madi Perry and Patrick Craig were expecting to be the only divers this season, but were pleasantly surprised with both newcomers, Max and another sophomore, Viet-Anh Dao. When asked about Max, 2016 New England Champion Madi Perry said, "Max never fails to put a smile on my face during diving practice. His perseverance is inspirational. Even after a bad smack,

Max laughs it off and never fails to get back up on the board and try again. It's incredible how far he has come in the sport of diving over the course of one season."

Patrick Craig, 2015 New England Champion, also spoke very highly of Max; “It was great having him on the team this year. He added so much positive energy, and it’s always impressive to watch new divers overcome so many obstacles to learn the sport. Diving is mentally demanding in the way that an individual must conquer one’s fears on a consistent basis, so it was really cool to watch Max learn new dives every single practice. My favorite memory of Max was watching him learn the inward 1 ½ somersault, a dive that is usually too difficult and scary for new divers. You have to jump backwards, away from the board, but at the same time, rotate towards the board. I’m not sure many people would be willing to do that, but Max really attacked the challenge. There were times when he nearly hit his head but would go right back up and attempt it again and again. He really showed a lot of mental toughness, and I think that’s such an important quality. Most people would get spooked, especially after having to watch the near injury on the replay TV, but it didn’t intimidate him. We’re really lucky to have Max and are excited to see him next year.”

After having so much fun this year, when asked if he would be returning to the diving team next winter, Max replied with, “Yes! I will definitely be diving! The team is a lot of fun and it was an incredible experience!” Max is finishing out his sophomore year playing lacrosse and is once again excelling at another new sport, his third new sport of the year. Max will be close to the pool next year as he will be a prefect in Longman, making the walks to practice nice and easy. We wish Max nothing but the best, and we cannot wait to see what he has in store for the diving team next year!



LC 2015-16 Dive Team from left to right Patrick Craig '17, Madi Perry '17, Viet Ahn Dao '18, Max Wickersham '18