

## Sports on Lopez Island

Very few people understand the importance of sports in a young person's life; most just brush it off as a mindless form of entertainment. Sports are actually an exemplary way of shaping one's character: they teach you how to perform under stress, how to react quickly and clearly in difficult situations, how to pull yourself up out of a bad mental state and find your focus, how to work well with other people, how to encourage and help others when things aren't going right or when one of your teammates can't focus, how hard you are able to push your body and mind, how to react to a loss— shake it off and move on, and learn from it and get better; the list goes on and on. The way you are on the court, the field, the table, the floor, or in any game will reveal how you will respond in almost any situation in real life. This is why not only winning games, but also how much the student-athletes here have matured and grown throughout the season, is a major focus at Lopez Island High.

Lopez Island has an excellent and well-known reputation of sportsmanship, as well as in state rankings, thanks to its incredible coaches: Larry Berg, the varsity Football and girl's Varsity Basketball coach; David Chicovsky, the Varsity Volleyball coach; Mel Weber, the Varsity Soccer coach; M.R. Buffum, the boy's Varsity Basketball coach; Steve Wilbur, the Varsity Track coach; and Richard Tetu, the Varsity Golf coach. I have been playing sports at Lopez for six years, but varsity sports for only three. I play on the girl's Varsity Basketball team; we have been to state two times in the past three years, and won the statewide sportsmanship award once. I also play on the girl's Varsity Volleyball team; we have been to state three years in a row, and I play on the Varsity Track team; the girls placed at State both years that I went. Although winning definitely makes the experience better, the atmosphere at Lopez is what ultimately makes the experience one of the best.

People want to be around upbeat, happy people, the ones who are enjoying life. Exercise is a serotonin-producing activity as it is, but when you are around your teammates, working hard together to reach one goal, it is an opportunity to bond, not to mention its being healthy and fun. Each of the sports teams at Lopez High School are closely knit, like a family, and are offered to anyone and everyone: there are no tryouts or students being cut. When one of our teammates is down or mopey, no one just focuses on herself and hopes that person does the same; it doesn't work that way on Lopez: we all grew up in a very supportive and cohesive community, so we carry on the custom of that togetherness and acceptance at school and during sports.

Being on a sports team at Lopez isn't just about winning games, it is about the friendships and memories we build with one another on long bus rides to and from games, during practice, at team bonding nights, while helping teammates with school work on ferry rides, and so on. I think that is what makes sports so special here, you are able to get to know so many different people, some not as naturally gifted, some extremely talented, and many fantastic people that you wouldn't normally spend time with outside of sports. Regardless of who you are or how well you play, we are all always willing to help and look out for one another on Lopez Island.