

University of Michigan Women's Water Polo
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Subject: University of Michigan Women's Water Polo Team

Dear Nicole:

I am writing to inform you of some recent updates surrounding Michigan Women's Varsity Water Polo team. Michigan Water Polo has just begun their season and we want to fill you in on some current updates. This letter will spotlight the new coaching staff, new team leaders, and the 2015 season.

This information was gathered in three interviews, one with head coach Marcelo Leonardi, one with assistant coach Caitlin Haskell, and one with team Captains, Elizabeth Williams and Danielle Robinson. All interviews were conducted on February 5th, 2015. Other information was retrieved from the University of Michigan's official athletic website, MGOBLUE.com.

Michigan Water Polo Resembles the Leaders and Best: New Coaches and New Team Leaders Strive for Distinction

Head Coach Marcelo Leonardi, A Man With A Plan

Before being named the third head water polo coach in Michigan history, Coach Leonardi was the head coach for the University of California State Northridge for five seasons. Marcelo led Cal State Northridge to a 23-9 record and a number 9 ranking in the NCAA. However, Leonardi's coaching experience does not end at the collegiate level. He currently is a coach for the USA women's national youth team. In the summer of 2014, Coach Marcelo Leonardi led the USA youth team to a gold medal at the Youth World Championships in Madrid, Spain. In addition to coaching, Marcelo is the national technical director for the Olympic Development

Program. Coach Leonardi gained his ability to fulfill coaching and administrative duties from his added doctorate degree in educational leadership from Azusa Pacific University in 2011.

After accepting the job at the University of Michigan, Marcelo Leonardi immediately started to make changes to the Michigan Water Polo Program. The first thing to change on Coach Leonardi's agenda was our team motto. Marcelo believes that *Teamwork, Leadership, and Culture* are the key components in being a successful team.

Teamwork, being the first portion, implies that in order to be successful every moving part in Michigan water polo is important. Coaches, captains, team members, trainers, weight coach, and other staff all are imperative to the team's success in the pool. Next, Leadership, which begins with Marcelo and Caitlin, leading the team in the right direction. Lastly, Culture is something that may take time, however it will exemplify Michigan tradition and appropriate norms within the program. In addition to Team 15's new motto, Coach Leonardi has brought with him a new system of play. Leonardi explains that his system of play emphasizes technical and tactical skills. His system permits a style of interchangeable parts. This means that a player in the same position as another player will be able to come in and complete the same task as their counter part. Marcelo is confident that his new system will change Michigan Water Polo in a positive way. Coach Leonardi believes that the team has done "well in implementing his system of play" and Team 15 will accomplish great things come the end of the season.



Coach Marcelo Leonardi

Assistant Coach Caitlin Haskell, An Ambitious Advisor

Coach Caitlin Haskell may be young, but she is driven by experience. Coach Lenoardi hired Caitlin to join the Michigan staff with the confidence that she possesses "work ethic that is unquestionable [and] experience as a successful Division I student-athlete." Haskell played college water polo at the University of California Irvine where she acquired her knowledge of the game and leadership skills. From 2008 to 2011, Haskell collected a 2011 ACWPC All-America honorable mention accolade and was a two-time Big West All-Conference second team selection. Ranking tenth among UCI's leading scorers, Haskell logged 118 goals in her career as



Coach Caitlin Haskell

an Anteater. Caitlin Haskell was a captain her senior season and lead the Anteaters to a Big West Tournament Title and a seed in the NCAA tournament, for the first time in program history. In addition to playing, Haskell has exceptional coaching experience. Haskell spent three year with SoCal water polo club, where she lead a youth girls team to a top three finish in Junior Olympics. She also worked along side Coach Marcelo Leonardi as part of the Olympic Development Program, where she served as SoPac Zone assistant coach and was later selected as national staff coach for the ODP Holiday Camp in Colorado Springs.

Coach Haskell brings her game experience and professional coaching knowledge with her to Michigan to lead the Wolverines to a successful season. In her opinion, the most important attribute she contributes to the program is her ability to not only coach, but mentor college aged women. Thus far, Haskell is pleased with the team’s progress with a 5-4 record. “We have shown that we can play with some of the top teams in California,” Haskell said, “and we are on our way to a CWPA Championship.” Michigan Water Polo, Coach Haskell believes, is on the right track for accomplishing new standards that others do not believe the team could achieve. Along with Coach Leonardi, Haskell hopes that Michigan’s improvements on *Teamwork, Leadership, and Culture* will result in a successful and winning season.

Captain Elizabeth Williams, A Natural Born Leader

Elizabeth Williams is ready to take on her final season at Michigan. As the starting center defender, Williams has appeared in nearly every Michigan game since her freshman year, accumulating 29 career goals, 25 assists and 52 steals. She has upped her offensive output in each season, posting career highs last year with 15 goals and 10 assists. A movement science major, she is a three-time AWPCA All-Academic and CWPA Scholar Athlete selection.



Beth Williams #4

Williams embarks on the 2015 season with past leadership experience, being one of four team captains the previous year. However, Elizabeth, “Beth” for short, explains that leading this season is different from the last. Beth believes that this season is a new start for everyone and even she felt like a “freshman.” The team had to learn a “new system of play and new language of water polo that we were not used to with our new coach Marcelo,” Beth said. Her main goals for this season are to beat Michigan’s only Big Ten rival, Indiana University, every time Michigan faces them, along with leading Michigan to the NCAA tournament for the first time in five years.

Captain Danielle Robinson, The Last Shot

Senior Captain Danielle Robinson is ready to take a final shot for her final season of collegiate



Danielle Robinson #7

water polo. Positioned as a utility player, Robinson has earned 17 goals, 36 assists, and 43 steals over her two seasons at Michigan. She ranked second on the team with 29 assists last year and recorded three games with multiple steals. After her freshman year, Robinson transferred to Michigan from the University of Maryland, to continue her athletic and academic career and is majoring in Communication Studies. Since then, she has proven herself not only to be a dominant player, but also a

respected team leader.

With the new season underway, Danielle has high hopes for Team 15. Like any competitive athlete, Danielle seeks a successful season, which will hopefully result in a CWPA championship and a trip to Stanford University for the NCAA tournament in May. One of her main goals, however, is to “come away at the end of the year thinking that I learned from those around I and grew as an athlete and as a person.” Danielle has learned a lot as a student athlete, and feels that she has truly grown and developed by learning from the people she spends the most time with: her teammates.

Join The Leaders and Best

The new Michigan Women's Varsity Water Polo team is excited to continue the 2015 season. Our dedicated coaching staff is confident that they will lead this year's team to a winning season. Our leaders are hungry to make a statement and propel Michigan into the top ten in rankings. Michigan Water Polo is geared up to finish the 2015 season strong and build upon our teamwork, leadership, and culture.

Thank you for your support and Go Blue!

Sincerely,

Allison Skaggs

University of Michigan Women's Water Polo

References

Howard, L. (2014, July 30). Haskell Joins Wolverine Staff as an Assistant Coach. Retrieved February 6th, 2015.

Howard, L. (2014, May 30). Dr. Marcelo Leonardi Named Michigan Water Polo Head Coach. Retrieved February 6th, 2015.