

Bard Athletics Podcast

0:00 Josh: Hi everyone! Welcome to our next edition of our podcast, I'm Josh Tyler, one of the Assistant Directors of Admission, and as always, we're here with Mackie Siebens, the Director of Admission.

0:10 Mackie: Hello everyone! As Josh said, I'm Mackie Siebens, I'm the Director of Admission, and like Josh, I am an alum of the college, class of 2012. And we're joined here by students and staff who have participated or are currently working in Athletics at Bard, and we're going to start with introductions, with David Lindholm.

0:26 David: Yeah, my name's David Lindholm. I'm the Associate Athletic Director and the head coach for cross country and track and field, and I also oversee club sports and work with our alums.

0:37 Adam: My name's Adam Turner, I'm the head men's basketball coach and the Assistant Athletic Director. I graduated from Bard in 2006 and played basketball here.

0:46 Kris: Hi I'm Kris Hall, the Director of Athletics.

0:48 Bill: I'm Bill Kelly, women's soccer coach and Director of Athletic Recruiting.

0:52 Sophie: I'm Sophie Niles, I'm a current student here at Bard, I'm a junior on campus and I am also a part of the women's lacrosse team here on campus.

0:59 Armando: My name's Armando Dunn, I'm the program coordinator in the Office of Student Activities. I graduated recently in May, and I played basketball here at Bard.

1:09 Mackie: Fabulous. So, we are going to start with a couple of questions, to give you, the listeners, a sense of what is on offer here by way of athletics at Bard. The first couple of questions are – can you, everyone joining us here today, give us a bit of background on the athletics program, what athletic facilities exist on campus, what sports the college offers, and what division and league we're in?

1:04 Kris: Mackie I'll handle that, this is Kris Hall. Thank you for inviting us to the podcast, we're excited to share a lot of good information about our department, and opportunities for students and student-athletes. Our athletic program at Bard is flourishing. We're a member of the NCAA Division III, we sponsor 19 intercollegiate programs for men and women. They're all listed on our website, which is bardathletics.com. We're also in a primary league, which is the Liberty League, one of the most prestigious academic and athletic conferences in Division III in the country. We're a proud member of that group with other institutions scattered throughout New York State, very similar peer institutions in terms of academic profile, opportunities for student athletes, and expectations surrounding leadership and civic engagement and community activism in many ways. The facilities on our campus have grown significantly over the last decade. We have our Stevenson Athletic Center, which houses most of our indoor activities and programs as well as staff offices. Our outdoor venues include the Ferrari soccer and lacrosse fields, Honey Field our baseball facility, our cross-country trails, outdoor tennis courts, and we're located in the Hudson Valley, which is a wonderful recreation area for outdoor individuals who might be interest in skiing and snowshoeing and cycling and mountain biking and hiking and lots of water sports. In combination with everything that we're sponsoring at the institution and opportunities for students, the region itself does boast wonderful venues within the Catskill and Berkshire mountains.

3:31 Josh: Great Kris, I think that's a great segue to our next question, do students have opportunities to play sports outside of the varsity options that we have? For example, are there intramural or club sports?

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3:46 David: Yeah, so I oversee the club sports. There are a few sports that are student run and student organized and those include men's and women's rugby, there are several different ultimate frisbee teams that play pretty regularly and practice throughout the week. We have a fencing group, we have an equestrian group, and then there are a lot of student groups that just pop up from time to time for different sports. We have sports like golf, like mountain climbing, there's a hiking group, there's been lots of different sports that have had students interested at various times. And it's something where if students are interested in a sport, they can sort of apply and start a club and get some funding and play whatever sport they want, and we try to support that with our facilities as best we can, give them a place to practice and play. We also have intramural sports like indoor soccer, pickup basketball, kickball, and those are student driven and organized to a certain degree too. If people want new opportunities or want to find a different thing to play, they can talk to us and get something started.

4:46 Mackie: There are some nice opportunities too, for students to mix and mingle with staff and faculty on the dodgeball court, which is happening this coming Saturday, which everyone's excited about as well. So, sort of leading on from that, how would someone go about, now speaking across all varsity, club, and intramural sports, how would someone go about joining those various teams and what does the recruitment process look like, the tryout process look like, specifically for varsity teams? Bill you maybe want to start off?

5:13 Bill: Sure! For the varsity sports, the coaches are actively recruiting scholar athletes. There's a couple of different ways that that happens. Sometimes the scholar athletes will get in touch with the coach, send an email expressing interest in Bard College and the sports here. Other times the coaches are out on the recruiting trail, going to tournaments, getting to know the athletes that they see. Maybe they have contacts from the coaches that they know, and those relationships then develop into a student athlete coming to visit and going on a tour and meeting the team, and maybe meeting a professor. And that starts the process toward selecting Bard as their destination school, hopefully.

6:01 Mackie: Yeah, and in terms of club and intramural sports, can anyone just sign up for those?

6:07 David: For club and intramural sports, anybody who's interested can join one of those sports at any time. There are also some varsity sports – I coach cross country and track and field – and we tend to accept anybody onto that team who's committed and interested in trying to participate at a high level whether they have a lot of experience or not very much. And most coaches have some sort of try out process for people who weren't recruited, and there are varying levels of difficulty to get onto those teams. It just depends on the sport and the year.

6:34 Adam: I would add something great for a prospective student to do if they're interested, is to reach out to the coach through their own search at different schools, not just Bard, but other schools. You can really see if you played lacrosse in high school and aren't sure if you want to play in college or what the commitment is, then you can reach out to the coach and let them know you did, and see if there's a roster spot available, and see what they tryout process is. Because I think that we're all looking for, like Dave said, dedicated, committed people. I know this year we have two guys who I didn't know about before the year, coming in to try out for the basketball team, and if they're going to participate in the same way everyone else is, we're excited to have them.

7:15 Bill: I just wanted to tag onto that, that one of the important things that you can do in reaching out to a coach is include your transcript, it's great for us to know about your academic background. Also, if it pertains to your sport, video, to share with the coach as much as possible about yourself.

7:31 Mackie: Sophie and Armando, do you guys want to talk a little bit about your experience coming into Bard as athletes?

7:37 Sophie: Yeah! I was personally recruited to Bard. I was on a travel team back home, and I did a lot of tournaments. The previous coach, she reached out to me, and she said Hey, I think you should really come to this summer camp, and so I went to a camp originally that was coupled with another school. We had a lot of correspondence back and forth and then I ended up coming and doing an overnight visit, just as Bill was talking about. I came and visited the campus, I really enjoyed it. A lot of teams as well have a prospect day actually, where we'll have a clinic that's offered, so you can kind of understand what the team dynamic is, and where you might fit in, what the skill level is on the team, and whether or not that's really what you'd like to commit yourself to.

8:21 Armando: Yeah, I had a similar experience where I played travel basketball over the summer and went to a lot of camps. I got recruited by a lot of different schools. I visited Bard two to three times before I actually decided to come to Bard. I thought it was the best opportunity for me and for my family. Basically, pretty much what everybody was saying just about committing to your sport and actually going in and saying "Okay, I'm going to do this" and then I have to balance my academics, my sport, and also extracurricular activities. If you're able to do that, then that speaks volumes about your character and who you are as a person and a player. It's definitely a good opportunity in terms of playing a varsity sport, but then also knowing that you can do it. The recruiting process is definitely a tough one. Especially if you're coming in and you're recruited by a lot of different schools, but visiting schools, talking to the coaches, and talking to the admissions people as well, and actually getting the demographics, and different information like that is huge.

9:33 Josh: Armando you brought up a good point – balance the workload with the class schedules and the athletic commitments. Can you guys both speak a bit about how you were able to balance those things?

9:46 Armando: I guess I'll continue the flow. It was really tough to start, because you don't actually realize how much time actually goes into playing a college sport. Generally, as Coach Turner was my coach while I was here, generally we would go through the pre-season. We're lifting and practicing and playing pickup a lot. Once the actual season starts, it's full blown. You've got practice, you're probably meeting up an hour to maybe an hour and a half before practice to actually get prepared for the practice, you practice, and then you may have study hall or you may have to actually go and get work done and possibly work out with your teammates after. It's definitely rigorous, depending upon the sport that you're playing, but definitely because you're in college, whatever level you play at, it's not an easy go. So definitely making time for you academics, especially taking classes that you enjoy, too, is also super important. Reaching out to professors and faculty is huge. Having that connection, not only with your coach, but having that connection with staff and faculty members is huge. That made my experiences way better at Bard.

11:04 Mackie: Before I move on to Sophie, could we just hear what your major was?

11:08 Armando: I majored in sociology, I had amazing, amazing professors who helped me with my Senior Project and my Moderation process. That experience on the academic side was awesome.

11:25 Sophie: I think also what you were saying, communication early on with faculty and staff early on really helps get through any schedule bumps that you might come up with in the semester, and staying cognizant of the classes and the time periods in which you have class is important. I think in my experience, the coaches have been very accommodating to class schedules, and we submit all of our schedules each semester. Our current coach kind of frames our practice schedule around that. We have kind of an idea of when we'll be allowed to have that study hall time and just being able to manage that time and having a clear idea of when we can have that time to study and work.

12:08 Mackie: And would maybe some of the coaches like to speak to how you help students balance that out, those commitments.

12:15 Adam: Yeah, I had dinner the other night with a guy who graduated two years ago, and I was asking him some of these questions. You feel like life now that you're in the workforce – he works in Connecticut for a company called Cigna, he was an econ major, he's kind of gone into the business world – he was like “yeah, you know I thought, after I got done with school, that I was going to have all this time, and actually, you know I feel like I have less.” He called back to just the lessons of time management, discipline, and not always having a ton of free time, and just that idea that that's what a lot of life's going to be if you're a high achieving person, you're trying to pursue a career that you're passionate about, that's you're going to have to put a ton of time and weekends into, and he's traveling for weeks at a time. I think that just the crossover between what they're saying is students who are here and adjust here, and what's going to happen five years from now, there's direct crossover between what they're learning, and almost training, balancing academics and athletics and social life and everything you're doing here, and what they're now going to have to do to be successful down the road.

12:25 Mackie: Great. And moving over into the logistics piece a little bit, can you guys talk a little bit about overnight trips and team travel and what that looks like? It's different for every team, but what that process is?

13:38 Bill: Sure, the women's soccer team just got back from an overnight trip. We take maybe two or three a year. We try to play teams relatively close to Bard to minimize any kind of time constraints. Generally, we leave on a Saturday for weekend tournaments, occasionally in Liberty League play we have to leave on Fridays, and do a Friday night to a Saturday, a Saturday day game. When that happens, we have the students talk to their professors as soon as possible to let them know if there's any class conflicts at all. Generally, classes are limited on Fridays, it's not a heavy academic day, so it's a good day to travel actually. With time management and being proactive with professors it's great to be able to manage those, and maybe you guys have had some experience with that, traveling.

14:33 Armando: Yeah, traveling can definitely be tough, because you have to make sure you're eating, and making sure you're taking care of yourself on the road. Usually most professors understand that yes, you're playing a varsity sport, and you have to sometimes miss a class. but usually you can make deals with professors in terms of, you'll hand in assignments a bit earlier, or you know that the work you missed from that day, you can get from another student, so finding different ways, even though you're on the road and you have things to do, and maybe you can get work done on the road, you're still talking to professors and communicating with them, and making sure that you're getting the work done, and you won't get penalized for missing a class or anything like that.

15:22 Adam: I'll talk as somebody who hasn't done a trip as a student athlete in 13 years, but in all honesty, when I think back on my playing career, I don't remember a lot of the practices, I don't remember a lot of the games, but I remember the trips. I remember the bus rides, I remember singing on buses, I remember playing games on buses, I remember the hotel rooms, being packed into hotel rooms watching a show, it's that stuff that becomes, 10 years later what you actually remember, and the heart of your experiences is the people and the time you spent together. And you can see it one of two ways, fortunately or unfortunately, maybe in the moment unfortunately because you have a lot of work, and gosh this trip is 5 hours and it's stressful, but fortunately in the long term, you have those five hours that you probably wouldn't have had where your 12 teammates, 20 teammates, are actually just together, you know? For five straight hours together, connecting and bonding.

16:20 Mackie: And moving sort of away from the topic of specifically participating in teams as players, are there opportunities to be involved when you're not a player? So, working at the gym, managing teams, how can students that want to do those kinds of jobs get involved?

16:38 Kris: We're fortunate that we actually, because of the number of venues that we have, and the busy athletic facility, and other programs that we have going on, we're actually one of the largest employers on campus. We, within a semester, might average between 100 and 125 student employees, ranging everything from working at our reception desk, to being a life guard, perhaps being an intramural referee, helping to manage a team, working at our home events, so we're happy to employ a wide range of students who are interested in working with us, and it is an economic opportunity for them, but it is also a way, as Coach Turner was saying, to involved people and to really understand the meaning of participation whether as a student athlete or as a student employee, the benefit of really the sense of community and support and an opportunity that we can offer to many students this way.

17:36 Josh: Great, thanks Kris. For students who might be listening and thinking about how they can get to know a little bit more about the teams, is there a way for them to visit a practice or a game or any opportunities like that? And if so, what do those opportunities look like?

17:54 Bill: I think the best thing to do is to reach out to the coach, if you're interested in that sport, and I know coming up during the next couple of weekends when we have games, I'll have scholar athletes coming to visit. They've let me know that they want to see us in action, and maybe be part of our pregame talk just to see what that's like. They can sit in the stands and watch the game, and talk with us again after the game. Sometimes that also involves an overnight where they combine watching a game with staying overnight with the team and getting to know more about life at Bard behind the scenes, so to speak.

18:28 Josh: Great, thanks Bill.

18:29 Mackie: I think, as we come to the end of the podcast, I just want to ask everyone if we could go around and maybe let our listeners know if you have a piece of advice for anyone who's interested in getting involved in athletics in any capacity in college, if you want to speak specifically to varsity teams that's fine too. We'll start with Dave.

18:49 David: I think that the first thing from every recruiting interaction I've had, from every recruiting clinic I've been to, one of the first things that a coach will ask you about are your academics. So, it's an important thing not to forget about your academics in high school because you're so focused on wanting to play a college sport. It's such a big part of the team and I think for the most part, especially me, but a lot of coaches will be thrilled to have a great student on their team if they're enthusiastic and work hard, over somebody who is dedicated entirely to a sport and has let other parts of their personality or their academic life drift. So that's something that I always want to remind people to do, just focus on your academics and the other stuff will take care of itself.

19:30 Adam: Yeah, I would say for anybody out there looking to get into college athletics, it's a massive commitment. I think there's going to be all sorts of people going to college who want varsity sport, club sport, intramural sport, or just to go to a gym and play pick up occasionally, and move. I think if you're looking for varsity sports, I think what's really important to know, is beyond what we do, which is a lot of what we've talked about on this podcast, why we do it is really important. And I know, just knowing Kris for almost 20 years, and our coaches really well, it's really about development for us. It's about taking somebody like Armando five years ago when I met him, and he was much, much different than he is now, and being able to help facilitate, help teach for sure, but more help facilitate somebody like Armando through the process of Bard, which is such an incredible place. The amount of development opportunity that's going to happen across the board here is massive. I think in athletics, what we do, is we help guide them through that process. Through the process of practice every day, all the things I talked about before, you're just going to gain so many life lessons. I think that's what we're about, we're about developing, I think if you're not one of our athletes, quote-unquote, who plays on of our teams, I think it's giving you space to develop your health, your wellness, and being able to provide that to somebody who walks into the gym and says hey, I don't play varsity basketball but I want to play basketball right, and we want to be able to give them an outlet to do that.

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21:00 Kris: I think Coach Turner covered a lot of areas that are important, but in terms of advice, we really look at the person who can contribute to our community, not necessarily always evaluating the best time, the best points per game, the best goals per game. We really want to get to know the individual, and we want to have a good understanding that the individual can contribute to our community at large. Whether it's things that we've discussed already, development, and leadership, and civic engagement, and critical thinking, and how the individual can really impact the social and academic life of the institution. Our prospective students are going to be engaged in how that can become for them, so that's I think our department advice, would be how can this place become you, and how can you contribute to us.

21:55 Bill: I think my advice to scholar athletes looking at colleges is to ask a question that I rarely get asked, and that is, and I think it's fair to ask a coach this question: what is your plan for me? What do you think my role in your program is going to be? And ask the coach to really describe that, and not that coaches are going to promise starting spots or anything like that, but get a good sense of how you're going to fit into the program, and what the coach is looking for.

22:24 Sophie: I think definitely keeping up with communication is important, especially in the recruitment process. If you're looking at the school and the coach hasn't otherwise reached out to you, reaching out to them is important, especially if you're interested. I think as well, coming to the campus and seeing the team dynamic is really important, because coaches can come and go, but the team and the specific spirit, the sort of life on campus is more of a surefire thing that you can kind of fall back on, if you end up maybe not enjoying sports as much, knowing that the campus is like and what the people around you might be like and what the community is.

23:01 Armando: I guess my advice to prospective student athletes, student athletes who may be coming, anything of that nature, just making sure that you're establishing relationships and you're growing networks with people within athletics, outside, just saying hello, really communicating with folks, I think that's huge because you never know how people can help you, you never know what you'll get from somebody, or advice. Like I've gotten advice from Kris, I've gotten advice from Coach Turner, and so things like that always make your experience, it broadens it, and it makes it a lot better. And so, I think, like I said, establishing those networks, establishing relationships is huge.

23:48 Mackie: Great. Well, thank you everyone for joining us, we appreciate your time. And if anyone listening has further questions, you can reach out to admission@bard.edu and we'll be happy to connect you with experts who can answer your questions in detail, and people who can maybe set up further conversations with you as well. Stay tuned for our next podcast, but for now we'll sign off! Thanks so much.

24:11 Josh: Thanks everybody!