

Teamwork and Discipline Shape Athletic Hall of Famers

Elizabeth Heubeck, English '91

Four UMBC alumni were inducted into the 2001 UMBC Athletic Hall of Fame. Although each of these athletes brought unique strengths to the playing field or the swimming pool, they share some common ground, too: positive memories of their college athletic careers and a strong awareness of how these experiences continue to shape their lives today.

Although it has been six years since his graduation, former UMBC lacrosse star **Jason Smith**, history '95, is often reminded of his time at UMBC as he reads through *The Baltimore Sun*. "It's great to see UMBC's name in the paper every other day," says Smith, regional manager for Gianni's Pizza Kits. It reminds him of his many fond memories playing lacrosse at UMBC. Beating the University of Maryland, College Park, the second-best lacrosse team in the country, ranks as one of the highlights. The game in which he scored 10 goals against Colgate is a close second.

Despite the exceptional value Smith brought to the team—he was a top-ten scorer in the country for three of his four years at UMBC—induction into UMBC's Hall of Fame is his first formal recognition by the university. According to **Steve Levy**, interdisciplinary studies '85, assistant director of athletic communications at UMBC, such accolades don't always tell the whole story of an athlete's ability. "Excellence is a difficult term to measure. Statistics and awards are important, but often they don't reveal the true picture of an athlete's contributions."

Although Levy believes athletes become better prepared and more goal-oriented as they progress through their college career, he notes exceptions to this rule. One of these exceptions is former UMBC lacrosse and field hockey player **Jackie Abendschoen Milani**, psychology '88. Although Milani played for UMBC before the teams advanced to Division I, Levy says Milani was highly competitive and would have succeeded at the Division I level from the start.

When asked about the highlights of her time on UMBC's playing fields, Milani's first thoughts turn to teammates. "We were more than just teammates; we were great friends," reminisces Milani. Working as a team remains important to Milani, particularly in her profession as coordinator of a Baltimore County and Maryland State SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions). Supervising a staff and a large group of volunteers, Milani says "I work toward having all of us in sync. If someone is struggling in an area, I try to jump in or get others to jump in and help."

As a mother of three, a full-time professional, a volunteer for area recreational sports leagues and fitness enthusiast, Milani applies the organizational and time management skills she learned playing competitive sports at UMBC to her professional and home life. "In college, we had to coordinate our study time with practice and games," she says. "Now I utilize these skills every day to make it in the work world and to coordinate family commitments."

Dave Miller, economics '96, has not slowed since his days as a UMBC swimmer and 1994 athlete of the year. Miller, a recent resident of San Francisco, has just completed the California Bar Exam while working as a law associate for Perkins Coie, LLP, where he practices corporate law primarily for high-tech clients. He moved to the West Coast after practicing law in New York for a few years.

Miller is excited when he recalls the camaraderie he shared with his UMBC teammates. "Swimming is the kind of sport where you end up spending a lot of time 'in the trenches' together, looking out for one another," says Miller. "When I was a freshman, senior teammate Loren Siebert, computer science '93, took an interest in helping me succeed. Later, I tried to get involved in helping out my younger teammates. I guess you could say I came full circle."

The resounding theme of teamwork among these elite athletes is echoed by **Denise Schilte**, economics '96 and former UMBC soccer player. "You would think achieving 80 career points or being voted Most Valuable Player of a tournament would have been highlights, but they were just bonuses," says Schilte. "What I miss most is just being with the team."

Schilte still gets her team fix, only now from a different angle. She heads the women's soccer team at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. "I think many women after college are happy with their college soccer careers and ready to move on to different avenues," says Schilte. "But I just can't get enough of this sport."

UMBC athletes Miller, Milani, Smith and Schilte walked away with an award representing their contributions to UMBC's athletic program. A more permanent symbol than the award, however, is the impact that college sports continues to have on the lives of these former athletes. "The discipline I achieved from being a part of team sports directly affects how I run my life," says Smith. "It has made me a better husband, father and professional."

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Call for Nominations

Nominations for athletes, coaches and administrators for the 2002 UMBC Athletic Hall of Fame are being accepted through October 1, 2001. Hall of Fame inductees represent the highest level of excellence when performing as a student-athlete, coach or administrator. For information on making a nomination, contact Steve Levy at slevy@umbc.edu, call 410-455-2197 or fax 410-455-3994.