

Field Hockey Season Overview

Coaching field hockey wasn't the vision Coach Nora Curley had for her career; however, she has now completed her tenth season in the sport. Curley coached basketball and softball before deciding to try field hockey. She started coaching field hockey at Amity Regional High School as the freshman coach and earned the junior varsity position before deciding to join Joel Barlow. Once she began working at Joel Barlow, the head coach position opened, and she has held that role ever since.

During school hours, Coach Curley is a special education teacher. She uses some of her classroom strategies on the field, such as managing her roster of over 40 athletes and handling pressure and anxiety. Curley pursued coaching because she loves working with kids and wanted a different way to do so beyond teaching. As an athlete who played multiple sports growing up, she was inspired by her coaches to want to work with kids.

This season marked the first time Coach Curley selected four captains: seniors Lyla Micola, Malin Stichter, Hannah Kurtz, and junior Lucy Zima. "Those are the four people that I look to on a daily basis to help guide the team and push the message that we are trying to push," said Curley. There is a strong balance of leadership styles among them, leading by example and speaking vocally. Curley credited the captains for understanding their responsibilities.

Coach was very pleased with her team's talent this season. She noted there is some young talent, alongside experienced veterans. Among the most improved players from last season were Caroline Lippoth, Lyla Micola, and Rachel Smith. Lippoth, a junior, has been a key part of the team in previous years, but Curley noticed her leadership on the field has grown. Micola has stepped up as a defender this year, which was necessary after some key players graduated in recent years. Additionally, goalkeeper Rachel Smith has improved each year, and with Jess Deutsch coaching her position, Curley has observed a boost in her confidence.

Curley has had up to four coaches in her three years leading Joel Barlow. Along with herself, she is assisted by Deutsch, Courtney Hylock, and Rieley Fitzgerald. Hylock has been with Curley for the entire three years, while Deutsch and Fitzgerald are new. "It makes my life a lot easier because now we have specific areas that we can cover," Curley explained. The extra eyes on the field are also very helpful.

Being a leader is very important to Coach Curley. She understands her players look to her to set the tone and that they feed off her energy. Through coaching, she has learned to step back and see the big picture rather than being overwhelmed by results or what's next. She recognizes her players have lives outside of field hockey.

Some qualities she aims to foster include commitment and perseverance. Showing up for yourself, your teammates, and your coaches is essential. Perseverance is particularly important since life isn't always easy. When things get tough, Curley insists her players give their best and not give up.

The 2025 Joel Barlow girls' field hockey team finished the regular season with a record of 6-8-2. They qualified for the CIAC Class S state tournament as the tenth seed. After beating Laurelton Hall 3-2 in the first round, they lost 3-0 to second-ranked Immaculate.