

# Triple threat: West just wants to win

*Senior's competitive edge extends to taekwondo, cross country, barrel racing and lacrosse*

Story by Bella Dodig, William Liang, Katharine Yao  
Design by Emily Matthews-Ederington & Emily Yen

**W**hen Cora West played on a boys' lacrosse team in seventh and eighth grade, her competitors were initially unaware that she was a girl. Back then, West's hair swung out beneath her helmet, earning her the nickname "Viking Boy."

West quickly established herself as the most aggressive player on the field. Once, after an opponent hit her younger brother A.J., West "ran across the field and trucked him" before running away "super elegantly."

"It was both really funny and amazing to see me hit the boys a lot," West said.

West's competitive nature stems from a long history of playing sports. While most kids start with soccer or basketball, West took up horse riding at five years old and barrel racing at eleven.

Both of West's parents were collegiate athletes. Her dad played football at Marietta College in Ohio, and her mom was a long-distance swimmer at the Colorado School of Mines.

"My parents were that couple that would go on triathlon dates," West said.

When the boys in her lacrosse league began hitting their growth spurts, West became less dominant.

During her final game, she was playing against "full-grown men," one of which hit her so hard she rolled head over heels three times.

"After that game I was like 'bye' because that scared me," she said.

For a long time West resisted playing girls' lacrosse because it "wasn't as aggressive," especially in middle school. When she did switch to girls' lacrosse in the summer after eighth grade, she discovered that playing against the boys gave her a competitive edge. By the time she reached high school and the competition became more intense, she rediscovered her love of lacrosse.

Her goal was to make varsity as a freshman even though no ninth grader had made the team in the last three years. "A lot of coaches didn't think I could do it," West said, "but as the stubborn person I was, I made it my goal."

West practiced and studied film for six hours a day during quarantine, performing extensive shooting and dodging drills in her backyard. She was a starting varsity low attacker for the team's first few games, but she lost the position once the season progressed after she caught a cold that briefly took her out of the commission.

She's just super authentic in everything she does.

**RACHEL FABRE**

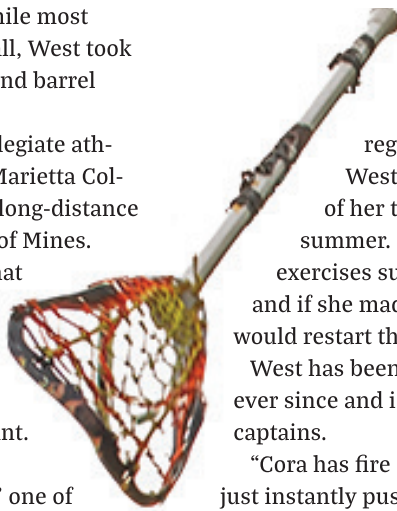
"Being on the sidelines for so many games where I didn't even touch the field was hard for me," West said. "Lacrosse was my identity, and I couldn't do it."

After working to win her spot on the starting lineup, West was devastated that a non-injury had put her on the bench. She was so scared of making mistakes that she started to play timidly. This lack of aggression ultimately quelled



**FINDLAY-BOUND**  
Cora West will play at the University of Findlay, a Division II college in rural Ohio.

Photo by William West



the very thing that drove her success in the first place.

Fueled by her desire to regain her starting position, West increased the intensity of her training the following summer. Her workouts included exercises such as 100 wall ball throws, and if she made a single mistake, she would restart the drill.

West has been on the starting lineup ever since and is now one of the team captains.

"Cora has fire and tenacity - she just instantly pushes everyone to be better," girls' lacrosse coach Amanda Bencosme said.

In the era of the single-sport college recruits, West is a throwback to a time when playing multiple sports was the norm.

Cora has fire and tenacity - she just instantly pushes everyone to be better.

**AMANDA BENCOSME**

"She's a multi-sport athlete. I would even say she's multifaceted in her approach to athletics overall with her attitude and demeanor," cross-country coach Rachel Fabre said. "She's just super authentic in everything she does."

West is also an all-SPC cross-country runner and taekwondo blue belt.

Because she lives over an hour away from campus, West gets up at 4:30 to run with her teammates. After being chosen as a cross-country captain this year, West focused on supporting and developing the team.

"Cora always imparts her wisdom on other members of the team - something not a lot of young people are willing to do," Fabre said. "She is the epitome of a good captain."

For taekwondo, West trains extensively over the summer at Fort Bend Martial Arts. In July, she finished third at the Taekwondo National Championships in Jacksonville, Florida.

"Fighting is a very different mindset than lacrosse

or cross country because you're physically hurting someone else - that's the goal," West said. "It has really helped with my mental toughness."

I'm a competitive person. I want to win.

**CORA WEST**

With so many athletic opportunities, West ultimately decided to play lacrosse in college. At first, West toured DI universities, excited by the promise of high-level competition, yet she discovered that the athletes at these schools focused their entire lives on sports. She wanted time to pursue her other interests and focus her studies on pre-physical therapy.

Numerous St. John's athletes find a path to playing in college through DIII schools, but West found that these programs lacked the competitive spirit she craved.

"The girls didn't have that fire that I was looking for," West said. "I'm a competitive person. I want to win."

So, on Nov. 8, she signed a National Letter of Intent with the University of Findlay, a DII college in rural Ohio. For West, Findlay presented the perfect combination of sport-life balance.

"I loved the coaches and the girls," West said. "The rest is history."



**STICKING WITH IT**  
West plays lots of sports, but lacrosse is her best.

Photo courtesy of Cora West