

The Herald-Palladium ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT



Photo provided

Berrien Springs' Marissa Jaggi will graduate this spring and has spent the last three years earning an associate's degree in mathematics from Lake Michigan College.

Marissa Jaggi:

A combination of math and tennis

By **BEN SPENCER**
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For Berrien Springs' Marissa Jaggi, balancing school and tennis has come as a welcomed challenge.

Jaggi is a senior at Berrien Springs High School and will be graduating in early June, but she has spent the last three years earning her Associate's Degree in mathematics from Lake Michigan College.

"It's not too difficult, because basically you're taking the same course load, but it's just harder work," said Jaggi. "Especially when you're taking Calculus 3 as a 17-, 18-year-old."

Come next season, Jaggi will be attending Holy Cross to play tennis under coach Steve Bender. Bender, the longtime former state championship-winning Buchanan coach, will be coaching Holy Cross in its first year with a women's tennis program.

Jaggi carries a 3.4 grade point average at Berrien Springs and a 3.0 at Lake Michigan College. The increased workload, however, has not kept her from finding success on the tennis court.

The 18-year-old singles standout has won the regional tournament for the past three seasons, and is in contention for a fourth straight come tournament time later this month.

Last season, she was given All-State honorable mention honors, and she has earned All-Conference honors each year of her career at Berrien Springs.

"She handles the stress pretty well," said Aly Gorby, who is a first-year coach at Berrien Springs. "I never see her overwhelmed or stressed out. There are some times where she has to drive herself to our matches, just because of her college classes. She doesn't get out of class in time to ride the bus with us."

"But she seems to be handling it really well. She never complains, and I know she's doing well in her classes academically and she's performing well on the court."

Jaggi is 10-3 on the season. Berrien Springs participated in the Portland Spring Sports Carnival

over the weekend, and Jaggi was able to get some needed practice for the upcoming postseason. The three other teams at the tournament were top 10 in the state.

"She's at a really high level of play," said Gorby. "Sometimes at practice she's actually helping out with the other girls and helping feed balls or help coach them, too. She hasn't really been challenged at the conference level yet, but she's hanging in there."

When did you first start playing tennis?

I started when I think when I was eight, so it's been 10 years now. I've always kind of been playing, and I play all year long. I play at the clubs around here in the summer. It's just kind of a daily activity.

Have you set any records as a tennis player at Berrien Springs?

I have the school record for the fastest match at 17 minutes, and, I don't know about the men's, but I have the girls record of the fastest serve at 105 miles per hour.

Your degree from Lake Michigan College is in mathematics, so is that what you want to study at Holy Cross as well?

Actually, no. Holy Cross doesn't offer mathematics other than in business, so I'm going to go into biology and hopefully become a veterinarian.

Is there anything that you find you like most about the sport of tennis?

What I like especially is that, in tennis, you're on the court all by yourself and you can be your own individual person, but when you're with your teammates you're also a part of the team. So it's just kind that you get the best of both worlds.

Do you have any goals set for yourself as far as tennis goes?

I don't see myself going after college. Usually if you're a pro, in tennis, you're going when you're 16. So I just hope to do really well at Holy Cross. We're going to set some records, obviously, because there are no records to break. I just hope to help kind of build that program for future years.

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The Herald-Palladium's Athlete Spotlight appears weekly on Monday in The HP Sports section during the school year. Athletes are chosen by HP staff members. Suggestions for Athlete Spotlight are welcome. Email suggestions to sports@TheHP.com. Athletes are limited to one selection per school year.