



Leading the Charge for St. Andrew's Athletics

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Meet the new—and familiar—faces who will step into head coaching positions this school year

Megan Altig – Girls Varsity Soccer Head Coach

Girls and boys soccer coach Megan Altig, who also works in the school's advancement office, is still riding high from what was a magical season for girls soccer, in which the team broke the school's record for most regular-season wins and made it to the semifinals of the state championship.

"I think the thing that I'm most excited about is just continuing to build what we've been working on," says Altig. "We're very fortunate to have had a lot of success last year, the kind of success that was unprecedented for the girls team. I think that the girls will come in with just as much excitement to hopefully repeat what we did. It's also been nice to see the overall school community's excitement about the program grow." She's particularly excited about the new crop of senior leadership, which she says will be "phenomenal," as well as a few new players on her team that she thinks will be difference-makers.

Called up to the head coaching job this year after former head coach Matt Carroll departed St. Andrew's, Altig says a lot of her flavor is colored by Carroll, with whom she had a strong relationship as assistant coach for the last four years.

"I might be a bit wilder with some crazier ideas, but a lot of my coaching philosophy comes from working with Matt. I'll carry that with me," she says. "I also got a piece of advice from [Director of Athletics] Neil [Cunningham] who said, 'If you're not coaching your team, who is?' That was something I took to heart because there are a lot of things that are going to happen in the game that we can't control, and my focus needs to now be more on the team than worrying about some of those things that we can't control. Okay, fine, the refs aren't calling things in our favor. Things aren't going well for us. How can I focus on what our strengths and weaknesses are to make sure that we're fixing what we need to fix instead of focusing on what I can't control?"

As a Penn State Nittany Lion, Altig was a four-year starter on the soccer team and served as captain her senior year. During her tenure, her team won four Big Ten championships, one Big Ten Tournament Championship, and made four trips to the NCAA tournament. Competitive by nature, the way the season ended for girls soccer has left Altig wanting more for her team. "I don't feel pressure like, 'You *must* be in the state championship,' but do we want to be? Absolutely," she says. "Is that my goal? 100 percent. But my focus this year isn't going to be, 'What seed will we be in the tournament?' My focus is that we put the best team out there, that we have excellent team culture, and making sure that the things we've put in place are the things we all continue to believe in and build."

Jonah-Kai Baker – Varsity Volleyball Head Coach

Two moments come to mind for Jonah-Kai Baker as the most magical of his athletic career. He remembers his junior year of high school, when his varsity basketball team appeared in the 2019 California Interscholastic Federation Division 3 state championship game. His second memory is more recent: early in 2024, Baker led the Carleton men's volleyball team as club president to the team's first ever national championship tournament. "It felt like a fantastic culmination of all the time and effort that I had put in on and off the court to grow our program," he says.

Baker grew up as a multisport athlete, but homed in on basketball in high school, where he earned two league championships, one section title, and one state championship appearance. As a student at Carleton College between 2020 and 2024, he transitioned to the club volleyball team, taking to the sport quickly and serving as team captain for three of those years. In his senior season, his team won an unprecedented third-place finish in the Northern Intercollegiate Volleyball Conference, with Baker recognized as an All-Conference middle blocker.

From the minute Baker first engaged with the St. Andrew's community, he knew that this would be a truly special place to begin his career as a coach. "I was struck by the positive energy and motivation of the students," he says. "The hardest thing as a teacher or coach is to make students care, and I have no doubt that St. Andrew's students care and want to succeed in a multitude of ways."

Baker will bring a fresh start to the volleyball program as head coach of the varsity team, but also will build off the momentum generated during the fall 2023 season, in which the varsity volleyball team earned its first league win in two years. He hopes to empower players to push themselves to new heights by building a strong foundation of trust between coach and player, and forge a line of clear and direct communication through the team. "[To be successful on the

court], we are going to have to prioritize the mental aspects of the game in addition to the physical,” he says. “Volleyball is a sport that requires immense amounts of mental fortitude as momentum can swing so much from point-to-point and set-to-set. A big goal for us as a team will be to instill a level of preparation and confidence such that we can trust and believe that, as a team, we have what it takes to win points, sets, matches, and championships.”

Rick Barron – Football Head Coach

Rick Barron, new head football coach and English faculty member, says two specific words define his mentality as he heads into his first season of Saints athletics: gratitude and passion. “I am grateful for the opportunity to coach, teach, and live on campus,” he says. “And I am passionate about sharing a love of football to my players and fellow coaches, while providing them with the skills and confidence they need to compete this season.”

Barron brings to bear a deep bench of coaching experience at various schools, including Portsmouth Abbey in Rhode Island, Robinson McLean in Virginia, and Savannah Country Day in Georgia. He’s also a proud former General, having played collegiate football at Washington and Lee University as a defensive lineman.

After an emotional, up and down season last year, Saints football is poised for promise, thanks in part to a leadership core of almost a dozen seniors, whom Barron has been communicating with prior to the start of fall camp. “This upcoming senior class has me the most excited about taking over this program,” Barron says. “There is an awesome group of seniors returning. While I have only interacted with them from a distance [so far], I have already been impressed by their sincerity, hunger to succeed, and leadership. As a group, they also have a ton of playing experience. I will be looking to them to set the tone for the team.”

In terms of Barron’s tone, he looks to grit, selflessness, and passion. “These are the pillars of my coaching culture,” he says. “These are the qualities I hope to instill in my players, and that I hope fans see on game day. We will take joy in working hard and leaving everything we have on the field.”

Although Barron says the move he and his family have made from Leesburg, Va., to Middletown has been a “little bit of a whirlwind,” he’s ready to settle in and get to work, and is counting down the days until the daily grind begins.

“I really enjoy the daily repetition and competition of practice,” he says. “In particular, I am looking forward to developing the technique of each player on the team. Whether it’s blocking, tackling, getting lined up, passing, catching, I want each player to feel like they know how to do their job and do it well. Great technique allows players to have confidence on the field, to play the game safely, to play the game fearlessly, and to handle more physically imposing competition.”

Barron says he’s looking forward to working with his entire coaching staff, but that there’s another, somewhat surprising “assistant coach” that’s already been doing the work in his absence: the culture of St. Andrew’s.

“In football, coaches work tirelessly to create a sense of team chemistry throughout the season. They know that strong relationships pay dividends in a game driven by a team-first mentality. But at St Andrew’s, this chemistry is already built into the fabric of the school,” he says. “We live, work, play, eat, worship, and study together every day. To me, this lifestyle offers the players, teachers, coaches, and staff a true camaraderie that cannot be fabricated. I am excited that my family and I get to take part in it.”

Kat Celata – Girls Cross-Country Head Coach

When science teacher Kat Celata was an undergraduate student at the College of William & Mary, she spent her time after classes running outside a local K-12 school. One day, the school’s athletic director approached the speedy college student and asked her if she had any interest in coaching. From there, Celata spent her afternoons at cross-country practice and weekends at meets—the beginning of a coaching career that has brought her to St. Andrew’s, where she’ll serve as head coach of the girls cross-country team.

“I really love the sport of running,” she says. “I can be kind of a nerd about training and the science behind athletics, but at the end of the day, it’s the life lessons that come from showing up and being part of something that makes cross-country and track a pretty special community.”

Celata comes to St. Andrew’s after eight years of teaching and coaching at Eaglebrook School in Deerfield, Mass. She started running long before she became a coach, as she competed in cross-country and indoor and outdoor track in high school, and completed her first marathon her freshman year of college. She says she knew when she visited St. Andrew’s for the first time that there was something special about girls cross-country: she felt the strong sense of community that initially drew her to the sport.

“It was clear that the girls cheered on and supported each other and were deeply committed to their success and the success of others,” she says. “The St. Andrew’s cross-country team has a history of success and greatness in the state, but the girls seemed more focused on making cross-country a positive and inclusive environment. The fact that they celebrate both state champions and girls running 5ks for the very first time really stood out to me.”

Coming off two successful years for Saints girls cross-country, with a 2023 first-place finish and a 2024 third-place finish at the DIAA Championship, Celata hopes to propel the team even further into greatness with a simple coaching philosophy: that hard, consistent work matters. She also aims to foster the sense of community and joyfulness that characterizes the girls cross-country team.

“I’m looking forward to walking through all the small and large moments with this team—the daily practices, workouts, and long runs; the days that don’t feel so great; and the days [where it] all comes together,” she says. “It’s being part of the whole story and getting to know each and every girl that will make this season special. ”

Greg Guldin – Swimming Head Coach

At the conclusion of the winter 2024 swimming season, then-assistant swimming coach Greg Guldin, along with assistant coach Mark Hammond, performed exit interviews with every member of the swim team. Among other questions, they asked, "What value is most important to a team?" The responses they heard drove the creation of what Guldin, now head coach for the winter 2025 season, calls "The Five Cs." "By *caring*, being *competitive*, remaining *committed*, exercising *camaraderie*, and being *capable* of telling our teammates anything, we will come as close to being as perfect as a team can be, recognizing that individuals will make mistakes and need support along the way," he says. "The Five Cs" will serve as the foundation for the team that Guldin hopes to build this year.

Guldin brings a lot to the table. He swam at Dickinson College and served as captain during his senior year of college. Before St. Andrew's, he coached at Woodberry Forest School for 12 years, 11 of which were spent as head coach. He also was the interim head coach of Tennessee Aquatics, a USA club team, in Knoxville, Tenn., for one year, the president of the Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association (VISAA) Swimming & Diving Committee for four years, and won VISAA Swimming Coach of the year in 2011, 2013, 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2020. He coached swimmers to the U.S. Open, Pro Series, and Junior National Championships, several of whom also made National Interscholastic Swimming Coaches Association All-American.

Since his arrival at St. Andrew's in fall 2022, he held the title of assistant coach, an experience that he says allows him to understand the distinct dynamics of the SAS swim team. "Most swimmers and most teams have the benefit of training year-round," Guldin says. "We do not. So we have to make up for that lost time by practicing better and smarter than our competitors. We do that by being a closer team than all those against whom we compete."

Along with assistant coaches Hammond and Caroline Towne, a new addition to the admissions team, and team captains Amanda Meng '25 and Nanda Pailla '25, Guldin is excited to build the type of team that arrives early and stays late, and shatters the physical, mental, and emotional barriers that can only be broken in the pool.

Alex Horgan '18 – Boys Rowing Interim Head Coach

As a former St. Andrew's rower, Alex Horgan '18 understands how storied the school's crew program is. "The history of crew at St. Andrew's has me really excited about being involved in this role," says Horgan, who, in addition to coaching boys cross-country, has also served as an assistant coach for boys crew. "Having rowed with St. Andrew's, and just knowing the long legacy of rowing [here] has made me really thrilled to be entering the head coaching role and being able to have an influence on the direction of the program going forward, and to have a role in that history."

Horgan counts himself a big fan of the Noxontown Navy, those avid St. Andrew's alumni rowers from the classes of the 1960s who, for the past 15 years, have shown up on Noxontown Pond for their annual "reunion crew camp" to prepare for the 2024 regatta season, which includes head races near and far, as well as rowing on the Thames at the Henley Regatta.

"I really enjoy rowing with and speaking with a lot of the alumni rowers past and present, and

understanding their history and dedication to the program,” he says. “I think it’s helpful for me to have that perspective and to share it with the rowers of today.”

As interim head coach, Horgan will oversee the boys side of the program, working specifically with varsity coaches, as well as collaborating with the novice-program coaches.

Horgan, who owns some of the fastest race times in school history from his days running cross-country at SAS, ran for Boston College, too, and he’ll be bringing that running mentality to the boathouse. “I plan to put a lot of my experience with endurance racing into my coaching,” he says. “Although they’re different sports, I think that the base of the training philosophy is pretty similar. It’s a lot of long endurance pieces: endurance workouts early in the season, with a lot of speed work and sharpening up of those skills to get ready for racing. It’s the same in cross-country.”

After an incredible showing at May’s Stotesbury Cup Regatta in Philadelphia—the nation’s largest and oldest high school regatta—in which St. Andrew’s School was the only scholastic program to send its top two girls and top two boys boats into the finals, Horgan can’t help but look forward to that moment again.

“When we go to Stotes, there is an immense amount of pride and excitement when, at the start of every crew race, they say the name of every crew on the starting line,” he says. “And to hear St. Andrew’s name called for the final, for me, it just really brings together all the hard work of the season that starts in the winter with kids on the erg, up into preseason with those long, cold days on the water. To get to May, and to be in Philadelphia, and to see the red St. Andrew’s blades out on the water is such a unique feeling. I think that’s where it just carries on that legacy for me. We’ve had that same oar pattern for the history of the school, and to see them in a Stotesbury final decades later, that’s something incredible to be a part of.”

Ben Horgan '19 - Varsity Boys Soccer Head Coach

While a student at St. Andrew’s, Ben Horgan '19 wore 18 on his chest his four years playing varsity soccer. He cherishes the memories of van rides, team meetings before games, and teammates looking out for each other on and off the field. “It was the highlight of my day, playing soccer with my best friends,” he says. Those four special years for Horgan were also exceptional ones for the St. Andrew’s soccer program—each year, the team made a run in the state tournament, and in 2017, they achieved a particularly remarkable 14-1 record in the regular season.

Horgan took his talents from St. Andrew’s to Washington College’s men’s soccer team, captaining the team for two years before graduating in December 2023. Among other awards, Horgan won the 2023 Alfred Reddish Award, an honor given to the senior male with a Washington College varsity letter who achieved the highest cumulative GPA, and was the 2020 team MVP. In 2021, Horgan led Washington College to its first conference championship in program history. In 2023, the team made the semifinals of the NCAA DIII tournament.

Since, Horgan got some St. Andrew’s coaching experience under his belt by helping coach the girls soccer team to the semifinals of the 2024 state tournament. Now leading the boys soccer

program as head coach, he's excited to get back on the St. Andrew's fields and strengthen the legacy of Saints soccer. "My goal is to build on and grow the positive culture of the group," he says. "Players need to feel supported by their teammates and coaches. They need to feel supported to make mistakes and be creative."

He points to a philosophy of teamwork, loving one another, and developing leaders that will guide him and the team through the season. "For practice, we are going to play a lot," he says. "I believe playing the game is the best teacher."

He is ready to jump back into the rivalries and the energy of Saints athletics that drew him in as a player, and to support the relationship-building that made his time at St. Andrew's so impactful. Last spring, the experience of seeing just how much excitement and support there was about the girls soccer team's success reminded him just how much love there is to go around at St. Andrew's. "The bonds and care between teammates here is unlike anything else I have experienced," he says. "I hope students here enjoy the journey and appreciate going through the ups and downs with each other."

Grace Saliba '12 – Varsity Girls Lacrosse Head Coach

In what feels like a quintessential St. Andrew's story, Grace Saliba '12 was inspired by her former coach Jenny Carroll (then Jenny McGowan) when Saliba played Saints lacrosse—a team that appeared in back-to-back state championship games during Saliba's playing time. Later, when Saliba joined St. Andrew's as assistant director of admissions, she was empowered by Carroll, whom she joined as an assistant coach of the lacrosse program. Now, as Carroll has departed St. Andrew's, Saliba feels called to carry on her mentor's legacy as she takes over the lacrosse program as head coach this year.

"I'm really excited because this school means a lot to me, and this program was a huge part of my life as a student," Saliba says. "Taking over for [Carroll] is a huge honor for me. I am so grateful to her for all she's done in terms of culture and making the program feel exciting. As head coach, I'm thrilled to step into that next level of leadership, but also, quite frankly, just continue to build off of what she's done."

A core takeaway for Saliba from the Carroll era of St. Andrew's girls lacrosse is balance. "You can be both goofy and fun while also being super competitive and taking the sport very seriously," she says. "That's the balance I feel like I've always had, and it's something that feels important to me to carry on. As these girls are competing and pushing themselves, finding that room to have fun and be authentic is something that really grounds you as a player."

Saliba, a two-time All American who helped lead her squad to two NCAA Final Four appearances while at Franklin & Marshall, knows what it's like to compete.

"I think the program is in a really cool place where the girls are really committed and excited and dedicated, and I feel like I have a great relationship with them," she says. "I know what it feels like to be on a team and compete for a title and be a competitive team in this state. Maybe that's not the goal you set on day one, but I can see that potential in these girls. So much of the foundation is already there. It was really cool for me to hear a lot of the girls saying last year that

they want to be pushed and want to take it to the next level—they're ready for that."

When Saliba leaves the pitch at the end of her first year as head coach, she hopes that the girls walk away with one overriding sentiment: that the game, and this team, is an opportunity to be part of something bigger than themselves.

"Sure, things might go wrong. You'll make mistakes. But it's not just about you. It's cool to be part of something bigger than yourself," she says. "I think that's something people feel generally at St. Andrew's, but our team is its own nice little microcosm. I think it's so easy to think, 'This is hard' or 'I'm going to shy away from this.' But to see these girls push each other to heights they didn't think was possible, that's pretty rad."

Lauren Urbont – Varsity Girls Tennis Head Coach

For new head girls varsity tennis coach and history teacher Lauren Urbont, tennis has always been a family affair. She grew up with her father and her grandfather sharing their passion for the game with her.

"My father and grandfather taught me to play tennis because they felt it was a lifelong sport that will allow you to meet wonderful people throughout your life," says Urbont, who graduated from Stanford University with an M.A. in history in 2023. "I remember seeing my grandfather on the court with his friends near our house throughout his entire life, even on holidays, and even when it was difficult for him to walk and run."

So far, she says, the two were right. "Tennis is a sport that will stay with you your whole life, and I am so excited to be a part of that lifelong relationship for our students," she says.

As a tennis standout in high school in New Jersey, she and her team at Dwight-Englewood School celebrated back-to-back county championships in 2010 and 2011. Along the way, she met some coaches who have fueled her perspective.

"Some of the best coaches I have had managed to balance a sense of fun and lightheartedness with constant improvement and hard work," she says. "When I coach, I always think about how to make sure that everyone on the court feels comfortable and excited to be there, but to also make sure that there are tangible improvements at each and every practice. I want players to feel comfortable and confident on the court."

Urbont looks to focus on consistency, strategy, and mental toughness, as well as explore how best to work together toward a shared goal. "I really hope we can discuss how we want to improve as players, and think about how to help each other get there," she says. "In my experience, working together toward concrete goals is the best way to build friendship and trust within a team."

Befitting a new addition to the history department, Urbont wants to dig into the story of each of her athletes. "Everyone comes to tennis with a history—how they picked it up, what they love about it, worries about weaknesses in their game, and goals for the future," she says. "Every player will have their own unique relationship to the sport, and as a coach I love getting to know

what these are. It only makes the team stronger to incorporate each person's approach into the team culture."

As not only a new coach, but a new member of our academic community, Urbont relishes the dual relationship she is set to embark on. "I am so excited to work with students both in the classroom and on the court," she says. "I really believe that a true education has so many different components—not just the traditional academic ones."