

Tops on the field, tops in her class

GLT's Ashley Santos shines in classroom, playing soccer



By [JAMES ALBERT](#) |

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TYNGSBORO – The first day he met Ashley Santos, Greater Lowell Tech girls soccer coach Brian Martin knew he had a talented player.

He realized he had a leader minutes before her first game as a freshman.

That leader has blossomed into one of the top defenders in the Commonwealth Athletic Conference. More impressively, Santos is ranked No. 1 out of 572 students in her senior class, with a 4.38 grade point average, and plans to apply to Harvard University and MIT.

“I remember the first game we had her freshman year was at Chelsea,” recalled Martin. “Before the game started, Ashley said to the

other defenders ‘Hey, let’s huddle. We need to do this and we need to that.’ She was reiterating a lot of things that I had gone over in practice. I’ve never seen that before from a freshman. It’s one thing to say those things but the other kids were all listening as if she was a coach. I was really impressed with that. A lot of kids don’t like to speak up because they don’t want to sound like a know-it-all or they don’t want people to think they are being mean or whatever, but Ashley has that way of talking and having people listen.”

Over the past three-plus seasons, the Dracut resident has played center defensive back for the Gryphons. She has played varsity lacrosse each of the past two seasons. Last year she helped the soccer team reach the statewide tournament, losing in the first round to a powerful Lynnfield team. This season the team is 6-2, including a win over Lowell High.

Last year she was named as a league all-star and this year she's dialed up her play a few more notches.

"Ashley's fast, she's intelligent, she's never out of control, she's always organized and she's the same way in the classroom as I had her as a student," said Martin. "She's like our quarterback. She sees the entire field and she's intelligent enough where she lets other kids know ways that we can get better. Her one-on-one defending is outstanding. She's just very calm and never over-commits. She never dives in. She's just always organized, under control and she's like that in both her school life and on the athletic fields. It's good to have another player who is like a coach and who is helping the other kids."

Santos comes from a family of athletes. Her father, Scott, played soccer for GLT, graduating in 1988. Her mother, Shelagh, was a track star who once held the long jump record at Dracut High, graduating in 1996. Her younger sisters, Emaleigh and Myleigh are in eighth and seventh grade, respectively, and also compete in sports.

While Santos has worked extremely hard to improve her skills in soccer and lacrosse, she said when it comes to the books, her mother deserves a lot of credit.

"I've always been more focused with academics my entire life. My mom has been a big help with that. She's just always there as a reminder. If it wasn't for her, I would not be where I'm at. I definitely focus on my academics a lot. I love to learn so I think that helps me," she said.

Santos is contemplating majoring in computer science to branch off to cyber security or perhaps mechanical engineering to focus on aeronautics, which deals with airplanes and rockets. She's interested in applying to Harvard and MIT. UMass Lowell is another possible destination.

She also knows she could lose her No. 1 class ranking.

"I never felt like it was pressure and never thought of it as pressure until last year when I found out that I was first," she said. "Then there was some pressure but I just roll with it. It is not something that I'm going to stress about because in the end, I only live one life so I'm not going to stress over the little moments and miss out on other opportunities in life."

She's certainly has made the most of her opportunities.



“Ashley’s first in her class, she’s part of the National Honor Society, she does Drama Club, she’s part of the Skills Club and was a district champion, she plays two sports and she works part-time, so it’s incredible how she balances it all. She has a good family,” said Martin. “Her sisters come to the games and there’s just real good support there so that obviously helps, too. She’s not only such a great student-athlete, but she has time to be a good friend, a good sister, and is involved in clubs and she remains a very friendly, bubbly person. She does a little bit of it all.”

Santos said her family is why she’s been able to balance everything.

“I probably would not where I am today without my family. If it wasn’t for my mom and dad, just being there to support me and bringing me to all of my soccer games and practices and stuff, I wouldn’t be here (with this team),” said Santos. “My sisters are the best.”