



Beth Clauss Freeland '80 celebrates Karen Opalenick-Dean's '81 game-winning goal in the 1980 state championship game.

MFS: South Jersey Lacrosse Pioneers

A beautiful, flowing game named lacrosse arrived on the fields of Moorestown Friends School in 1958. Fifty years later the school is celebrating a program that has produced countless fond memories, collegiate lacrosse players, and coaches at all levels, along with one state championship, seven undefeated seasons and two Friends Schools League crowns.

Floss Brudon, at the time MFS field hockey, girls basketball and girls tennis coach, learned about the sport while attending a field hockey camp with her MFS team in the summer of 1957. She made the decision to start a lacrosse team after returning from camp. Tennis was temporarily suspended as a girls sport and resumed in 1962. It was a decision that proved quite fortuitous for many future MFS lacrosse players.

“We didn’t have the space for tennis. We needed another spring sport,” said Brudon, who had been at the school since 1949 as a physical education teacher and coach. “The girls loved it right from the beginning...the running...the catching. It’s a beautiful game, but a little rough now.”

Collingswood, Merchantville (now closed) and Moorestown high schools also began play in 1958. MFS won its first contest that season over Merchantville and lost to Moorestown and George School. According to Brudon, lacrosse was much more established among prep schools in Philadelphia and the surrounding Pennsylvania suburbs. Brudon was quick to mention former Collingswood coach Bea Markwick and former Merchantville coach Dr. Rickie Rice as two women who played pivotal roles in establishing the sport in South Jersey.

The Powerhouse on Pages Lane

However, one suspects that the legend patrolling the fields off Pages Lane quickly picked the sport up herself as the MFS program soon became a powerhouse, embarking on an unprecedented string of success in the 1960s. After compiling

a 2-4 record in 1959, teams from 1960-1967 compiled a combined record of 53-2-1, which included undefeated seasons in 1961, 1962, 1963, 1965, 1966 and 1967. The three blemishes on the eight-year combined record were from out-of-state schools George School and Tower Hill (DE). Amazingly, in 1961 and 1967 both varsity and junior varsity teams finished undefeated, a sign of the depth of talent present in the program.

A highlight of that era occurred in 1965 when the team traveled to the annual Play Day Tournament, sponsored by the Philadelphia Women’s Lacrosse Association.

It is the MFS career highlight of Diana Harrison Comber '67. “I remember we faced Shipley in the final,” she recalled. “I remember their girls disdainfully wondering: ‘A school called Moorestown Friends, who are they?’ Well, we thought we’d show them and this little school from South Jersey took away the championship that day.” MFS was the first New Jersey school to win the tournament.

Comber went on to play field hockey and lacrosse at the University of Pennsylvania. She was the first of three lacrosse-playing MFS sisters and now lives across the pond in England.

MFS Girls Lacrosse at a Glance

Overall Record: 380-217-21

Undefeated Seasons: 8

State Championships: 1 (1980)

State Final appearances: 4 (1984, 1980, 1979, 1976)

State Tournament appearances: 21

Friends League Championships: 2 (1997, 1998)

**Floss Brudon (coach from 1958-1982):
member of New Jersey Lacrosse Hall of Fame**



50th Anniversary of Lacrosse Celebration Saturday, May 3

Don't miss the 50th Anniversary Celebration of Girls Lacrosse on Alumni Weekend! An outdoor picnic begins at Noon on the athletic fields. An Alumni vs. Varsity game will begin at 2 p.m., preceded at 1:45 p.m. by a special ceremony.

She began playing as a seventh grader at MFS. "I loved the sport instantly because it had no boundaries. The sport has changed a good bit," she said, also quick to credit Brudon with the evolution of her game. "One of the great things about Floss was she always coached you to keep things simple – concentrate on one or two things to be successful."

Classmate Janet Lippincott '67, a realtor in Chestnut Hill, recalled the same successes at the Play Day tournament and fondly recalled Coach Brudon: "The fabulous thing about Floss was that she allowed you to feel the game and play intuitively." Lippincott enjoyed quite a bit of post-MFS success and is a member of the Ursinus College Athletics Hall of Fame. She was a three-sport athlete at the Pennsylvania college. In 1970, Lippincott and Comber crossed paths again as both were named to the U.S. National Touring Team, which traveled to Great Britain for a month-long slate of games. The two 21-year-olds were the youngest members of the team.

Both former athletes remembered Coach Brudon taking the MFS team to watch the Great Britain and Ireland International Touring Team (GBITT) play an exhibition match, which provided both with inspiration. Little did they know their dreams would come true. "They (GBITT) were fantastic to watch," said Comber. "I said to myself: 'I want to be an All-American lacrosse player so I can play against them.' After watching the team play, Lippincott was made a promise by Brudon. "The U.S. team wore these white blazers. Floss told me if I ever made the U.S. team, she'd buy me a white blazer," she said. Sure enough, after being named to the team, her former coach delivered a white blazer.

Comber stayed involved with the sport for a number of years and served as an assistant lacrosse coach at MFS in the early 1970s, a turbulent time in the U.S. "It was a difficult time to coach," she said "There was a lot of rebellion and we had key people not showing up for practice." The coaches occasionally had to reach down to the Middle School for players and Comber was responsible for evaluating the Middle Schoolers. One of those players during the 1972 season happened to be her sister, Pam Harrison Musulin '77. "It turned out that the best player available then was none other than this rude little seventh grader who was my sister!" she laughed. "I decided to take the chance and she was amazing." She recalled her sister shutting down several opponents who were four, five, and six years her senior. "Those seventh and eighth graders kept the spirit alive," she said.

That spirit was noted by teammate Janet Stevens '77, who played four years on the varsity team and went on to play lacrosse at Franklin and Marshall College. "We had great teams and a great spirit," she said of her MFS experience.



The original MFS lacrosse team in 1958. Kneeling (l to r): Karen Sieg Barton '61, Charlotte Stiles Borg '59, Pam Brigg '61, Helen Hagstoz Reynolds '61, Elizabeth Fiume Hosey '60, Peggy Wildman Kimple '61. Standing: Coach Floss Brudon, Betsy Wood '58, Elizabeth "Beppy" Archer Hooks '58, Kathy Archer '60, Mary McAllister Teale '58, Anne Taylor Emerson '61, Mary Hull Saladino '59, Stacy Capehart '60 and Carol Dauphanais '61. Missing from photo was Helen Archer Crawford '58.

MFS Captures State Title

As the years progressed, competition became fiercer as public schools grew larger. In 1976, the New Jersey Lacrosse League was formed and a state tournament was played for the first time. MFS found itself in the final of the inaugural tournament. "The state final game was on the day of the Mock Political Convention," said Stevens. "They bused the entire school to Cherry Hill West to watch the game (won by Collingswood 6-4). You could hear the roar of the crowd the whole game which was something we weren't used to."

Looking back, Stevens appreciates what the game did for her as a student. "It was a great learning experience, and a lot of very good structure," she said. Stevens lauded her former coach Brudon: "She loved the game and you could tell. I don't recall her ever yelling at us. We had a lot of fun."

Stevens, a Moorestown resident, has two daughters at MFS: Kailey Burgess (7th grade) and senior Morgan Burgess, who captained the Friends Schools League championship field hockey team this fall.

One of the top highlights in program history occurred in 1980. On June 6 of that year, the MFS squad brought home the New Jersey state girls lacrosse championship with a thrilling 9-8 victory over crosstown rival Moorestown to conclude a storybook 18-0-1 season. The game was held at Pennsauken High School. Moorestown had reached the title game by upsetting powerhouse Collingswood, who had beaten MFS in the school's two previous appearances in the state final (1976 and 1979). Newspaper reports on the match note that MFS enrolled just 137 students in the Upper School, while Moorestown enrolled over 1,200. "We had 27 girls try out for the team and 18 stuck it out," said Brudon in a June 7, 1980 *Burlington County Times* story written by Curt Holbreich.

The following is an account of the deciding moments of the contest by Holbreich:

"When Moorestown Friends girls lacrosse coach Floss

Boys Lacrosse Enters Seventh Season

In the fall of 2000, Doug Tracey '05 and Chris Yingling '05 were ambitious eighth graders eager to start a sport they loved, lacrosse, at MFS. The two boys went to then-Athletic Director Deb Surgi asking what they could do to get the sport going at the school. She asked them to come up with a plan, according to Yingling's father Steve.

"To their credit Chris and Doug came up with a plan and took it to Deb," said Steve Yingling. After school approval, that spring a middle school boys lacrosse team competed under coach Chuck Amidon, who was then Upper School Dean of Students and a Social Studies teacher (now a teacher/coach at Shipley School).

The following year, Steve Yingling was tabbed as MFS varsity lacrosse coach. Results-wise, it was a rough first year that paid dividends down the road.

"It was a pretty good group," said the coach. "We had two seniors: Michael Brick '02 and Matt Stevens '02. The rest were all ninth graders. Our first game ever we lost in seven overtimes to New Egypt."

In 2005, when the initial group had become seniors, the program registered a 13-4 record and made an appearance in the Friends Schools League semifinals. The team also appeared in the NJSIAA playoffs that season for the first time.

Concurrently many South Jersey schools were starting boys lacrosse programs and the sport was booming in many communities. The trend continues.

"The sport has exploded in the area and South Jersey is now a recruiting hotbed for college coaches," said Yingling. Catch the boys lacrosse team, now in its seventh season, in action on Alumni Weekend, on Saturday, May 3 at 2 p.m. vs. Shipley.

Brudon talks about offensive threats, attention naturally turns to sisters Chris '81 and Kim '80 MacColl. The pair accounted for 209 goals for a team Brudon described as her most explosive in 22 years of coaching lacrosse at the small private school.

"But with yesterday's NJSIAA championship game...tied at 8-8 with just under three minutes to play, the Friends squad went to an alternate plan...Since the MacColl sisters had been 'limited' to five goals by the tough Moorestown defense, the Friends players decided during a timeout that it would be up to the defense to score the game winner.

"A few seconds later Karen Opalenick '81 intercepted a Moorestown pass deep in Friends territory, rushed toward the Moorestown net and slipped a shot behind goalie Terry Simpson for the clincher with 2:25 to play."

The MFS celebration was on.

According to Susan Harrison Reid '81, sister of Diana Harrison Comber, Brudon thought this group of players could produce something extraordinary: "She saw our group coming from Middle School. So many of us had been playing together



The undefeated 1967 team (9-0) concluded a three-year 24-0-1 stretch for the program. Kneeling (l to r): Lucy McKeon '70, Diana Harrison Comber '67, Marion Benner Iles '67, Coach Floss Brudon, Elizabeth Raymond Boxer '68, Dana Scott Cornelius '68, Martha Wildman '69. Standing: Jean Lippincott '67, Martha Richie '67, Leslie Ransome Hudson '67, Janet Lippincott '67, Diane Landis Wright '69, Margaret Brunt Griffin '67 and Wendy Harris (manager). Missing from the photo are: Debby Lubarr '67 and Debbie Lilly '67.

for so long I think she thought that the stars might be aligned."

Reid is now the head girls lacrosse coach at Louisville (KY) Collegiate School. Last season, the team produced the school's first state lacrosse championship, a coaching milestone for sure, but also another coaching highlight for Brudon...Reid called her by cell phone during warmups before the game and also after the game so her former coach could hear the celebration and resulting 'dogpile.'

"It was so neat to share that moment with her," said Reid, who played collegiate lacrosse at the University of Pennsylvania. "She had an amazing way of inspiring athletes. She was great at taking athletes and non-athletes and making them total team players. She has created such a community of players." Reid was also quick to mention the efforts of other MFS coaches at all levels (assistants, junior varsity and middle school), specifically Nancy Custodio.

Reid recalled the almost poetic orchestration of cuts and passing that marked her MFS teams. "I remember our goal was for every player to touch the ball before we scored, and sometimes we would do it and nine people would touch the ball, which was amazing at the high school level," she said.

Gender Equity "Revolutionary"

Sarah Feyerherm '82 was another athlete from the early '80s to go on to play college lacrosse. Amazingly, she played three sports at Hamilton. She went on to coach field hockey and lacrosse at Washington College (MD) before moving into administration at the school. She is now the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs at the Chestertown campus.

"When I look back at my experience, what is so amazing is that as female athletes, we were just as important as the male athletes. MFS was way ahead of its time," she said of playing in an era in which Title 9 was not strongly enforced and female teams at high schools and colleges were often required to play and practice on inferior fields at inconvenient times.

Many MFS Girls Lacrosse archived photos are now available online for viewing, saving to your computer or for purchase via SmugMug! Visit mfs.smugmug.com and locate the Lacrosse Archives gallery.

Reid also noted the school's commitment to gender equity when recalling the decision to bus the entire school to Cherry Hill West for the 1976 state championship game. "For a girls team! It was revolutionary," said Reid.

Feyerherm was more than ready for lacrosse at the college level when she left MFS. "I was extremely well prepared to play college lacrosse," she said. "Floss was tough. She didn't mess around and she told it like it was. But later you realize how much you appreciate it."

Karlyn Wesley Supple '84 was a member of Brudon's final lacrosse team in 1982. When her name was called to be a member of the 1981 varsity team, she had an interesting reaction: "When Floss called my name to be on varsity, I said: 'I think you made a mistake.'"

The veteran coach quickly made her expectations for the freshman clear, according to Supple: "She said: 'I don't care where the ball is, go get it! If you can touch it, you can catch it.'" According to other players interviewed for this story, this would classify as a "Flossism." It was a catch phrase that Supple used throughout her 15-year coaching career. She coached multiple sports, including lacrosse, at Friends School Baltimore for five years and served as head coach of the Exeter (NH) High School girls lacrosse team for 12 years before resigning from coaching to spend more time with her two children. She still teaches and chairs the Physical Education department at the school.

She credited her coaching philosophy to Brudon and Sue Sadler, who took over in 1983 and coached MFS for seven years. "I took a lot from Floss and Sue," she said. "Basic skills are where the game is at. Ground balls are key. I always remember Floss never allowed you to blame the refs. We had to accept that the ref is human and makes mistakes just like you make mistakes."

Friends League Competition Begins

Current President of the Women's Lacrosse Club of South Jersey Heidi Schwartz Brunswick took over the reigns of the program in 1992 as a young teacher just out of college. "I was very lucky to be at the right place at the right time," she said.

Although the Friends League sponsored girls lacrosse from its inception in 1981, MFS did not begin official competition in Friends League girls lacrosse until 1993. Brunswick eventually steered the Foxes to consecutive Friends Schools League titles in 1997 and 1998.

Upon her arrival, Brunswick, an honorable mention All-American at The College of New Jersey (then Trenton State), was immediately struck by the tradition present at MFS. "When it really hit me was walking into the gym and seeing all those banners," she said.

Now a health/phys. ed. teacher at Cherry Hill West, she clearly recalled the first Friends League title in 1997: "Just beating GFS (Germantown Friends) was like winning the national championship. The



The 1998 team celebrates a second consecutive Friends Schools League championship with a dip in the MFS outdoor pool.

chemistry of the team really clicked."

Brunswick also was at the helm in 1999 when MFS (seeded No. 32) upset No. 1. seed Red Bank Catholic in an early round state playoff game on an exciting run to the quarterfinals.

Beyond her marriage to Mike Brunswick (Upper School Dean/Phys. Ed. Dept. Chair/Head Varsity Girls Basketball Coach/Asst. Girls Lacrosse Coach), she still has strong feelings for MFS: "I still feel an allegiance to MFS. It was definitely a learning experience for me. It really shaped me in the values and philosophies of sports."

One of Brunswick's former players, Tracy Ransome '98, was highly complimentary of her MFS coach: "Coach Schwartz was amazing. She taught me how to play." This is no small compliment coming from someone who went on to become captain and MVP at the University of Richmond.

Ransome comes from serious lacrosse lineage. Her father Percy Jr., '67 played at the University of North Carolina and for the Philadelphia Wings and her grandfather Percy also played the sport. Brother Eric played at Anne Arundel Community College and her aunt Whitty Ransome '63 played on the great teams of the 1960s and will be honored on Alumni Weekend 2008 with the Alice Stokes Paul 1901 Merit Award.

Tracy Ransome credits her athletics experience at MFS (she also captained the girls soccer and girls basketball teams) for providing her with the confidence and strength necessary to pursue her career in acting: "Going to MFS shaped who I am. I look back on sports as a source of confidence. That all stems from Moorestown Friends School."

Indeed, the program Floss Brudon began 50 years ago appears to have paid innumerable dividends for the school on and off the field.

The tradition of coaching excellence has been kept alive at MFS in the 90's and 00's by accomplished former collegiate players such as Julie Sullivan Williamson (Syracuse University), Hope Gordon Scibal (Duke University), and current second-year coach Kristin Sander Makatche (George Mason University), who has also served as an assistant coach at several NCAA Division I schools.