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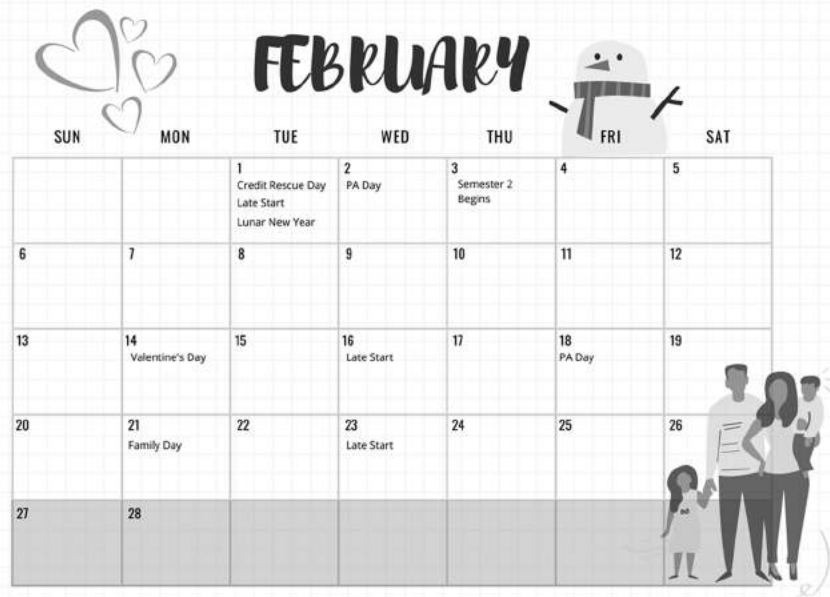


Photo Credits: Riley Loo

Interviewing a Mac Athlete

Megan Eng

We hope you had a fantastic and active winter break, Mac! To start the new year, I got the chance to interview an amazing student-athlete, Riley Loo, who is in Grade 11. Riley has been on the Boys’ Varsity Hockey team since Grade 9. In this interview, Riley talks to us about his love for hockey, as well as his introduction to the sport.

When did you first start playing hockey? What position do you play? Can you tell us a bit about your experience playing hockey in or outside of school?

I started playing when I was ten. I didn’t really know too much about hockey until my dad signed me up for a Bauer program, which taught me about the game of hockey. I’ve played many positions over the years but I usually play as a winger. My coaches usually like that I am comfortable playing both left and right wing.

Hockey to me is my escape from the world. When I am on the ice, I feel like every stressful event going on in my life vanishes. Just being able to feel the cold air hitting my face or just enjoying spending time with my teammates is the best feeling.

Why did you join the team at Mac? How did you feel when you were trying out?

I decided to try out for the Mac hockey team because I wanted to see what it would be like to make a school sports team. I also got some encouragement to come to try-outs from some teachers in my freshman year, and to my surprise, I made the team!

It was pretty nerve-racking going out there as a freshman as I didn’t know too many people on the team, but after a few games and practices, it was almost like we just all connected as a family. Overall, I really just wanted to have some fun and meet new people.

Do you have a favourite player? Is there a team you cheer for?

For now, my top three would be Auston Matthews of the Toronto Maple Leafs, Nathan Mackinnon of the Colorado Avalanche, and Connor McDavid of the Edmonton Oilers.

I tend to be a bit more biased to Matthews. The reason why most people like Matthews is because of his shot and skill, but something that I really enjoy about his gameplay is his offensive and defensive skills, as well as his ability to take pucks from opponents easily.

If you couldn’t tell, my favourite team is the Toronto Maple Leafs as it is my hometown. They also have a talented young group, even though they can’t make it past the first round.

Was there anyone that influenced you to pursue hockey?

The person that influenced me to play hockey was my dad. He would watch the Leafs games and I would always watch the players pass and move the puck around at great speeds. Watching my dad become so passionate when he watched hockey really showed me how much the game of hockey mattered to him.

What are the key skills you believe a player or team should have?

Over my time playing, I believe the best skills a player or team should have are being able to recognize your weaknesses and being willing to work on improving them, which is much harder than it sounds.

Another great skill would be having good hockey smarts and communication skills. Being able to make and anticipate plays, and know where everyone is on the ice really sets apart great hockey players from good ones. Also being able to communicate with your teammates in a positive way can really help them understand what needs to be done and things they can improve on.

What would you recommend for those who may be deciding whether they should join?

I would say to try out no matter what skill level you’re at. I believe that Mac hockey has a wonderful group of staff and students who will support you and make you feel welcome in the hockey community on and off the ice.

Thank you for speaking with us, Riley! Best of luck this season!

Mac Students and Their Thoughts on Remote Learning

Todd Ash-Duah

Happy New Year, Mac! Unfortunately, as we all know, schools were closed early in January due to concerns surrounding the Omicron variant and rising COVID-19 cases. For a lot of students, switching to virtual learning wasn’t easy. Despite being able to sleep in and not commute, remote learning also made it so students couldn’t physically interact with their friends and connect with their teachers during class. I was curious to hear students’ perspectives on this structure, so I asked two Mac students about how their two weeks of online learning went.

First, I interviewed Aren Melkon, a Grade 12 student. I asked him about his experience with remote learning in January, having experienced it last year. He replied, “I still didn’t feel like we were really learning anything. There are a million things to get distracted by, and it was hard for me to have a long attention span.”

I also sought the opinion of Evan Chen, another Grade 12 student. While asking him about his opinion on remote learning, I also asked him to elaborate upon its impacts on students’ mental health. He replied, “There is only so much knowledge you can absorb through a screen. Anyone who has played tabletop games virtually can relate to the fact that the experience is not quite the same without human interaction. I think most people would agree with me that the human interactions during classes or lunch are some of the fondest memories a student can have. Without it, you are taking away the only real fun part of school. This could lead to serious emotional damage to students because, at home, they aren’t learning how to socialize in a group setting in person. The method of learning may have changed, but the people learning haven’t.”

Thank you to Aren and Evan for sharing their insights into the effects of remote learning. If you feel overwhelmed, be sure to talk to your guidance counsellors and follow @machealthcouncil on Instagram for help on combating stress that can build up while learning remotely. You can also contact Kids Help Phone through kidshelpphone.ca or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 for more support. Stay safe and warm, Mac!

Back to In-Person Lunch!

Rachel Tang



High School and Beyond

Junior Girls' Volleyball

Lia Sayegh

The pressure was on at the Junior Girls' Volleyball tryouts last November. Everyone was already nervous and the overwhelming number of participants certainly didn't help. The stakes doubled when Mrs. Hunnisett announced that only twelve players — fewer than a quarter of participants — would make the team this year. Everyone was on their A-game.

The tryouts were exhausting as no one expected this much competition and such a demand for fitness. Going into it, the majority of girls anticipated playing games so one can imagine their surprise when in reality tryouts consisted of skill drills.

After what seemed forever, the final cut arrived and players were drowning in their anxiety. The roster for this year's junior girls' volleyball team was as follows: Brooklyn Basler, Athena Hatziz, Amaya Hunnisett, Rosie Kiofos, Julia Mantas, Navriti Negi, Victoria Oradauskas, Dafni Papatotiriou, Lia Sayegh, Tina Patoulis, Maria Vagenas, and Balla Vitas, with Megan Eng as the manager and Mrs. Hunnisett as the coach. Their first game was a mere week and a half away. Although everyone was extremely skilled, they had yet to develop any team chemistry — a crucial aspect of any team sport.

Their first ever match would be against Georges Vanier Secondary School. Despite being nervous, the team was also filled with excitement. That day everything they worked for was finally put into motion; no one spared any effort. The warm-up moved quickly and then the referee called for the game to commence.

It was a messy first few minutes. With the pressure weighing down the team, it took some time for them to get the feel of the game. But, once the first jitters passed, Mac began gaining momentum. It was a tough two sets, as both were teams around the same skill level and experience. It was anyone's game. Unfortunately, Mac lost the first set 25-to-23. This small drawback, however, would not define Mac's spirit. The team sprung back into action for the second set, improving and learning from previous mistakes. Despite putting up a phenomenal fight, the second set ended like the first, with Mac losing 25-to-23.

Mac's morale was inevitably damaged after losing such a close match for their first game of the season. However, after a team pep-talk, the girls realized all the positives that came from the day. Although they lost, they learned valuable lessons about positioning, team dynamics, and technique that no doubt improved their game tremendously. Mac surely can expect their Junior Girls' Volleyball team to come back stronger, smarter, and quicker.

Interviewing Mac's Class of 2021: Marian Farra at McMaster's Engineering Co-op Program

Karen Mitro & Nancy Zou

Welcome back to our Interviewing Mac's Class of 2021 series! Meet Marian Farra, a former writer for Mac News, who shares her insight and experiences as a student at McMaster's Engineering Co-op program.

What post-secondary program are you going to? How did you decide?

I currently attend McMaster for Engineering Co-op. I always knew that engineering was what I wanted to study, but choosing the university was the hardest part for me. In the end, I chose McMaster because their first year is general engineering. Additionally, they offer a great hands-on course where we have three labs a week to build, create, and code collaboratively. Through this course, we've designed wind turbines, modelled surgical tools, and coded robots so far — it's been a blast. This program has introduced me to many different strands of engineering I hadn't considered before and I am so grateful!

What advice would you give to Blackscots interested in your field?

Get to know as many people in your program as possible, and don't be afraid to ask upper years for help (feel free to contact me if you need anything!). The transition from high school to university can be extremely overwhelming and everyone will be struggling just as much as you. You won't be able to get through engineering on your own, so supporting and finding support in others is possibly the most beneficial thing you can do.

How would you describe the atmosphere of your university community?

McMaster University is one of the most accepting places I've ever been to!

There are so many resources on campus to help you, including three COVID-19 testing centres, wellness centres, financial aid offices, and every and any club you can imagine. I live in residence and was lucky enough to be in the engineering building (Hedden Hall). It is so great because I can just knock on my neighbour's door and ask for help with a physics question or go downstairs to the kitchen and see everyone helping each other with a chemistry lab. The food here is also great; you have on-campus and off-campus dining, where your meal plan works for places like Timmies, Starbucks, Popeyes, Osmows, and so much more. It has honestly been so refreshing living in Hamilton, and the people here are just amazing!

Tell us about your transition to university so far. Did Mac prepare you well?

[...] The workload you have in high school cannot compare to the massive workload you'll encounter in university, let alone engineering. The transition was really difficult at first, but having friends helped me get the hang of everything because we could support each other in managing our time. There is nobody to hold your hand and tell you to hand things in and get things done, so you really have to figure it out on your own. Mac did its best to prepare me for McMaster [...], but at the end of the day, you have to discipline yourself and learn to manage time as best as you can.

What have you done/recommend doing to help finance your education?

There are so many opportunities available to help pay off your tuition. The first thing anyone should be applying to is OSAP. Whether or not you think you can afford your tuition, OSAP is great to even offer you some extra money to help buy supplies and textbooks. I highly recommend applying to bursaries, as they usually have a short to no application at all. Bursaries are great to help take a couple thousand dollars off your tuition. If you want something bigger, there are general entrance scholarships for every university. McMaster also opens a ton of scholarships for specifically engineering students starting in the winter semester. If you're enrolled in a co-op program, you can begin your work semester starting in the spring semester and make money. You can also apply for teaching assistant positions as early as in second year.

What advice would you give to Grade 12s who are still undecided?

If you are undecided about your major, don't worry! There is no such thing as picking the wrong major since it's so easy to switch between them. I'd suggest figuring out what you don't want to do first, making a list of things you are good at, and going from there. In the worst-case scenario, you can always minor in something you really love. Right now, I'm in the process of minoring in film studies as I earn my engineering degree and it is the best decision I've ever made. I can pursue two things I like at once. You have all the time in the world and can always change what you like. Pick something steady that you also enjoy.

Anything else to add?

Just enjoy university! Yes, grades are important but you should also join clubs, go to hosted events, and meet new people. Even your professors will host social gatherings to meet them and others in your program. GO TO THEM! Engineering can definitely be very overwhelming, but you will have time to go out, see movies, and shop. Don't spend the next years of your life holed up in your room only studying, because it will only make you miserable. So, please make time for yourself, get some sleep, drink a ton of water, and have fun!

Thank you and good luck, Marian — we appreciate your insight as a former (and current) Mac student! You can find her on Instagram @mare_carstaires or Discord at ZOGAS#8888. If you found this interview helpful, be sure to stay tuned for our upcoming issues for more!



Photo Credits : Marian Farra