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Taking Their Game to the Next Level

Six recent grads share how Schechter set them up for success in sports & life

By Paul Chanan, Physical Education Teacher, Sager Solomon Schechter Day School

Sports play an important role in the Jewish community, and Schechter is certainly no exception. From Schechter's well-balanced and highly regarded physical education curriculum, to its competitive Interscholastic athletics program, students have numerous opportunities to be physically active, to learn and develop athletic knowledge and skills, and to compete as Schechter Lions. I recently caught up with six graduates who have continued their love of athletics that was honed at Schechter well after graduation.



Ari Rosen (SSDS '16), a pitcher on Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology's college baseball team



Ann Kushnir (SSDS '15), front row, second from left, is a student-manager with the University of Michigan's women's basketball team



Zach Rosen (SSDS '18), a point-guard for Grinnell College's renowned basketball program



Micah Stern (SSDS '17), who plays on the Duke University club baseball team and serves as the bullpen catcher for the university's Division 1 team



Owen Stern (SSDS '15), a data analyst with the University of Michigan's baseball team, who recently accepted a similar role with the MLB's Detroit Tigers



Coby Maeir (SSDS '16), a broadcaster and sports journalist covering professional and Division 1 sports at The Ohio State University

I asked them about their post-high school sports journeys, how Schechter set them up to succeed in high-level athletics, and what advice they have for current and future Schechter athletes.

What is abundantly clear from all of their responses is that **Ann, Owen, Ari, Coby, Micah,** and **Zach** all took the life lessons they learned at Schechter, and applied them at a very high level in order to follow their dreams in the world of sports. We hope their stories inspire both current and future Schechter Lions, who have a great passion for sports, to similarly shoot for the stars.

Here is what they said:

Q: What have you done in sports/athletics collegiately and/or professionally since graduating from Schechter and from high school?

Ann Kushnir: “Following high school, I was fortunate to spend a gap year studying in Israel, where I was a part-time intern as an assistant soccer coach for 9 year-old-boys who attended a Jewish/Arab school. Once I started college at the University of Michigan, I began working as a manager for the Women’s Basketball team.”

Owen Stern: “Since graduating, I have served as a data analyst for the University of Michigan baseball team, and I will be joining the Detroit Tigers as a Baseball Analytics Associate this upcoming season. Working in professional baseball has been a dream of mine, and I’m excited to get started right after graduating college.”

Ari Rosen: “Since beginning my collegiate career, I have been a member of the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology baseball team.”

Coby Maeir: “I am in my second season of covering the Columbus Blue Jackets for 1st Ohio Battery. I have written for Ohio State’s newspaper, The Lantern, covering the school’s women’s soccer team for the 2022 season. I have broadcasted Ohio State football, men’s basketball, and men’s hockey games on Scarlet and Gray Sports Radio, Ohio State’s student radio station. I have worked as a graphics producer, replay operator, and camera operator for Big Ten Plus.”

Micah Stern: “Since my graduation from Schechter in 2017, and Rochelle Zell in 2021, I have been involved in both recreational and professional baseball at Duke University. I currently play for the Duke Club Baseball team and serve as a Student Manager of the

On-Field Department for the Duke Baseball Team (Varsity). I am also a bullpen catcher for the team.”

Zach Rosen: “I am playing NCAA College basketball at Grinnell College.”

Q: What lessons or themes learned at Schechter have helped you succeed at the next level in athletics?

Ann Kushnir: “My time at Schechter provided me with incredible opportunities and skills that I continue to use every day. Through my time playing sports at Schechter, I learned the importance of teamwork and resilience. In my classes I learned how to have the confidence to speak up and ask for help when needed. While it is important to have independence, Schechter also taught me the valuable lesson that asking for help when needed can only help and make you better.”

“The intensity and quickness of working with a collegiate team was new to me, and I improved at my job and learned a lot by asking my fellow managers for help. Another lesson I learned from my time at Schechter was the importance of leadership. My coaches taught me how to be a leader on and off the court and those values have helped me in my work at the next level in athletics.”

Owen Stern: “Schechter taught me how to ask for help and be goal-oriented. Having personal relationships with my teachers at school helped me feel comfortable asking for help, which eased some of the stress of completing assignments. Also, asking questions is a great way to learn more about a particular topic. The regular homework assignments helped establish my work ethic at a young age, allowing me to see the results of my hard work. Having a strong work ethic definitely helped my growth within the baseball industry.”

Ari Rosen: “I think that Schechter prepared me to be a leader on the team. Despite not having a lot of playing experience, I still am regarded as a leader. As a result of the unique learning experience at Schechter, I believe that I was able to begin developing my leadership skills early on. Specifically, I remember Mrs. Honan stressing the importance of my attitude and participation in gym class because others looked at me as a leader.”

Coby Maeir: “I learned about interacting with others so I could be a team player. I learned that in order to accomplish anything in life, you have to work hard.”

Micah Stern: “Schechter has taught me valuable lessons revolving around a common theme of communication and togetherness. Having the unique opportunity to connect with people my age who share a similar religious background has reinforced my skills of effective communication and humility. These skills are common around the diamond, to ensure that everything baseball-related runs smoothly. Knowing how I fit in within my small Jewish community has developed into finding my place in helping better the Duke Baseball team, whether it be mudding baseballs, throwing with a pitcher, or bullpen catching, finding how you can best serve your community is a lesson that has stuck with me throughout middle school.”

Zach Rosen: “Schechter taught me countless life lessons that helped me reach my goal of playing a collegiate sport. I learned how to work with a team by playing middle school basketball, soccer, and the many group projects throughout my nine years at Schechter. Additionally, the Jewish values presented to me helped me balance being a competitor, and being a good teammate.”

Q: What advice would you give to a Schechter student or recent graduate who may be interested in pursuing sports and athletics in college or as a professional?

Ann Kushnir: “Pursuing sports professionally or in college can be an intimidating task, but it is important to always be open to new opportunities. It takes time to build up to what you may really want, and starting off with something a bit different than what you had in mind is never a bad thing. With anything new, it is important to maintain relationships with the new people that you meet. Always follow up when meeting new people even if you don’t think you want to play/work for them. Lastly, be confident in yourself and your skills. A lot of people want to be a part of the sports world and understand that you bring something unique and individual to the table.”

Owen Stern: “Throughout my time in high school and beyond, I connected with as many people as I could that worked in the baseball world. I had lots of phone calls to learn more about what it takes to work in professional baseball. From my experience working through this process, the most important advice that I would give myself back in 8th grade is to demonstrate interest. This can be done by writing, learning how to code with data, conducting solo

and group research projects, staying up to date with current trends, making connections with lots of professionals in the industry, and reading books!”

Ari Rosen: “I would suggest that any Schechter student or recent graduate utilize their resources as part of the Jewish community. There are so many people within our community who want to help you play sports at the next level, so my recommendation would be to just reach out to people. Whether it is a teacher at Schechter, like Paul Chanan, or someone at your shul, or just another member of the Jewish community. I personally messaged various Jewish D3 baseball players that had gone to day school on social media, and all of them were more than happy to give me advice or answer any questions I had.”

Coby Maeir: “There are many people competing for very few spots, so it’s not easy. You have to be willing to work really hard for little to no money, so you have to love it. If you don’t love it, don’t get into it, because sports are supposed to be fun and if you don’t love it, it’s not fun. Additionally, making connections is crucial so don’t be afraid to reach out to people in the industry. You also have to be willing to work when your friends are on break, such as weekends, nights, and holidays. Also, find people whose opinion you value because you are going to get told no a lot and it’s important to keep working hard if it’s something you really love to do.”

Micah Stern: “Get 1% better everyday” – a quote that is written on every document for Duke Baseball, and repeated numerous times by Coach Pollard. Being good at something does not happen overnight, nor can you wish that you’ll magically become athletically talented by simply picking up a bat. It’s never too late to start working hard. If you wish to play club, varsity, or even professionally, begin to take those steps in becoming a better player and reaching your goals.”

Zach Rosen: “Some advice I would give to a Schechter student or recent graduate who may be interested in pursuing a sport in college would be to appreciate all the resources that Schechter provided. The amazing teachers and staff care so much about every student. Lastly, use Jewish values to live your life. These core values taught me how to have a great work ethic, and be an ethical human being. These are the traits which ultimately impressed college coaches.”