



Perspectives on athletics

A seasonal review of the Perspectives Charter School Sports Program

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Girls Volleyball Rallies for Conference Title Win

The Perspectives Leadership Academy/Perspectives High School of Technology girls volleyball team made history this fall. The Warriors compiled an outstanding 11-1 record to win the Chicago Public League Pink 2 conference championship – the first conference volleyball title for any Perspectives network high school.

History doesn't come easily, however, and after one set of a late-season match against visiting Bowen, it didn't appear as if it would happen at all. Perspectives played badly in that set and lost it but rallied to win the next two sets—and the match—easily.

That avenged a loss to Bowen earlier in the season, and the Warriors went on to clinch the league crown with a victory over Dyett on Oct. 12.

"I'm really proud of the girls' resilience," coach Eron Powell said. "That match particularly showed resilience. It was make or break ... we knew if we lost we would not win conference. They had so much fire in themselves. They did not want to lose at home."

Powell also was proud because the team depended heavily on newcomers. Two were freshman starters: libero Destiny Williams and outside hitter Crystal Lackey.

"We were definitely young," said Powell, whose starters also included sophomore setter/middle hitter Willeasha Love.

Inside:

- Perspectives football coach Terry Jones optimistic about future, Page 2
- Perspectives middle school volleyball, soccer and flag football roundup, Page 3.
- PCS coaches participate in professional development workshops, Page 4.

Powell's top player was a senior, setter/outside hitter DeJenea Shaw, who was the Warriors' captain and MVP as well as an all-tourney selection at the Little Village tournament.



Perspectives Warriors Girls Volleyball Team

"She had the desire, the effort," said Powell, whose team was 14-11 overall. "Every game, she put it all on the floor."

"She was definitely the vocal leader and an inspiration to the girls, keeping them up even when we were struggling."

Junior Kai Beard was Most Improved Player, and senior Ashae Wheeler was the ADL athlete.

The Warriors ended the season with an eight-match conference winning streak. They will play in a tougher conference next season because of this year's title, but Powell hopes to keep the momentum going.

"I really like the group of girls we have

going into next season, and I can't wait for August to get here," he said.

He also hopes that Perspectives' championship season will help him attract new players to his program, especially freshmen and sophomores who may not have been familiar with volleyball.

"I hope it puts us on the map now," he said. "The reality is it's not so high up among the sports in South Side schools. I hope more girls get excited about it and come out."

Perspectives Joslin finished 1-5, but head coach Laura Harrington praised her players for their positive attitudes. Team captains were seniors Amina Wade and Lucia Garcia.

"The team had the best spirit we have had in [my] three years," Harrington said. "It was great fun."

Perspectives/IIT Math & Science Academy's volleyball team was winless in six games but came "really close" to several victories, said head coach Juanita Johnson, who was in her first year in that job.

Top players included junior captain Nina Ridgner, senior Briayle Clark and sophomores Taa Calhoun and Danielle Thames.

Johnson invites more girls to come out for next year's team. "We'll practice hard and are looking forward to a better season," she said.

Programs prosper with help from CYSA

Perspectives Charter Schools is expanding the quality and quantity of its athletic opportunities thanks in part to

the Chicago Youth Sports Alliance.

CYSA, a not-for-profit corporation that uses team sports to improve

the social and academic growth of disadvantaged youth, has provided funds and other support allowing Perspectives to

launch or expand three programs this fall: a middle school flag football league, a middle school basketball clinic and

Continued on Page 4

Warriors end tough schedule on high note

Slowly but surely, Terry Jones is building a championship football program at Perspectives Charter Schools.

Last season, Jones' first as a high school head coach, the Warriors lost five of their first six games before winning three straight to finish at 4-5 overall and 3-3 in the Chicago Public League's Chicago Great Lakes Conference.

This season, Perspectives moved up to the tougher Windy City Conference and again started slowly, losing four of its first five games. Once again, though, it finished fast, winning its last four contests for a 5-4 record, 5-2 in the Windy City standings, which was good for a third-place tie.

Not bad for Perspectives' fourth season of varsity football ever.

The Warriors' season turned on an amazing Game 6 comeback against then-undefeated Marshall when senior backup quarterback Robert Sparr threw a 1-yard touchdown pass to senior receiver Leroy Bridges III on the final play for a 24-22 victory.

Moments earlier, defeat seemed certain when Marshall intercepted a Perspectives pass near the goal line, but soon after that junior strong safety Edward Brown forced a Marshall fumble and recovered the ball. Perspectives moved to the 1-yard line, and just before the game clock hit zero Sparr took the

snap, rolled to his right and found Bridges III in the end zone.



PCS Running Back Spencer Williams, #5

"I never played in a game like that before," Bridges III said. "My determination took over, and I wasn't going to drop that pass for anything. I was just trying to help the team.

"It ended up a real good day."

It was the only regular-season game Windy City co-champion Marshall would lose, and Perspectives won it without starting quarterback Elijah Stokley, whose ankle injury forced him to miss two games and slowed him in others.

Other injuries also contributed to the team's slow start. Perspectives, though, is used to overcoming adversity. Almost none of its seniors had played tackle football before high school, and the Warriors are a cooperative team made up of players from all four PCS high schools.

It was the senior group of Stokley, Bridges III, running back Spencer Williams, two-way lineman Michael Fort

and free safety/quarterback Josh Wagner that led the drive to a winning season. Bridges III became the first Perspectives player to receive all-city honors. Stokley and Williams received academic all-state recognition, and Stokley, Wagner, Fort and Williams were named to the all-Windy City team.

Stokley said Perspectives' slow start was also attributable to the players' lack of focus but that the early losses got their attention and re-focused their energy on "playing for the team and our goals."

He said a pep talk from Jones "woke everyone up because after that everyone worked 100 percent at every practice, and it showed on the field."

The future looks bright for Perspectives, which—counting the varsity and lower-level teams—had 92 players out for football. What's more, many of the freshman and sophomore players arrived with football experience in elementary and park district leagues.

"Teams that do well usually have feeder programs or players who played previously coming into high school," Jones said. "They had an opportunity to play the game before, so their game awareness, their IQ of the game, would be a little more advanced."

Jones said the goal next season is a conference championship. The offensive line, led by 6-foot-4-inch, 315-pound sophomore tackle

Christopher Hawkins, should be strong and help spring potential game-breakers Jimmie Williams, a junior receiver/cornerback, and junior running back/cornerback Lonnie Washington, a state track meet qualifier in the 100-meter dash last spring.

Junior linebacker Sergio Norvell, already a two-year starter, will help lead the defense.

For Jones, the Marshall victory is proof that a conference title is not some unachievable dream.

"It showed we do have the capabilities to be the best team in the conference," he said. "It's a challenge to our next year's kids ... knowing we can win the conference title."

"There are some real good players at the lower levels," Bridges III added. "If they can get the immaturity out a little bit and some leaders step up and take charge, they can go far."

About the Newsletter

This newsletter's author is Barry Temkin, who retired in 2008 from the Chicago Tribune and is volunteering in the Perspectives Charter Schools athletic department. He spent his last 20 years at the Tribune writing a high school sports column that covered hundreds of schools, including Perspectives.

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Middle Academy sports finish season strong

Flag Football

The Perspectives Middle Academy flag football team was a powerhouse this fall, finishing 7-1 overall and 5-0 in the inaugural season of the Perspectives co-ed flag league. PMA also was undefeated in Chicago Public Schools league regular-season games, winning the Rock Island area.

“It was a great season,” said Tristan Roche, who is 25-4 in his four seasons as the team’s coach.

Captains were quarterback/defensive lineman Hakeem Adebimpe, running back/linebacker Dominic Smith, running back/cornerback Khalil Ryals and wide receiver/safety Jermaine Potts. All had standout seasons, as did wide receiver/defensive lineman Mikyel Guyton, tight end/defensive lineman Jeremiah Cole, wide receiver/cornerback Anfernee Neal, two-way linemen William Fleming and Jonathan White, wide receiver/cornerback Antonio Allen and center De’Mon Fox. All are 8th-graders,

The team MVP was Adebimpe; Most Improved Player was Guyton, and the ADL Athlete was Potts.

“We would like to get back to the regional championship next year, but it will be a rebuilding process, as the majority of our contributors are graduating to high school,” Roche said.

The Perspectives Joslin flag football team finished 1-3, posting an impressive victory over Perspectives/IIT Math & Science Academy while also losing close games to MSA and PMA.

“The kids laid it all on the line – 100 percent effort,” coach Tiray Jackson said.

Anthony Elerby (8th grade), 7th-graders Elijah Moore and Destiny Garner and

6th-grader Ra’Kwon Roberts were captains. Garner was Most Improved Player. Elerby was MVP. Roberts was the ADL Athlete.

“We had a great group of kids who were very enthusiastic about the game and eager to learn,” Jackson said. “Many were not familiar with it but made it their duty to listen and learn invaluable skills that they can only build upon. I look forward to helping them enhance their skills further next year.”

The Perspectives/IIT Math & Science Academy flag team finished second in the Perspectives league.

Volleyball

The Perspectives Middle Academy volleyball team improved throughout the season, finishing with a 6-3 record that pleased co-coaches Bridget Brennan and Stephanie Madziar.

“We started the year with a lot of new girls who worked hard to learn and constantly improve their bumps and serves,” Brennan said. “In the end, it paid off as losses eventually became wins, and we ended the year feeling good and hopeful for next year.

Co-captains Haneefa Gibson (8th grade) and Quaytasia Dail (7th grade) “led our team with positive and supportive attitudes,” Brennan said. “Quaytasia was our most valuable player, and we look forward to having her another year.”

Next season, Brennan added, “We are excited to have a core group of girls returning, and we look forward to growing their volleyball skills and having fun. Making the playoffs would be great, too!

The Perspectives/IIT Math & Science

Academy middle school volleyball team did not win a game this fall, but according to head coach Danielle Dvorak, its 14 players “did amazing at their tournament, where they supported each other and rose to the tournament’s high level of play.”

Captains were Khierra Moore, Starlet Wyndam, Miracle Stephens and Kayla Buchanan, all 8-graders. Moore was MVP. Wyndam received the ADL Athlete award, and 6th-grader Kinara Brown was Most Improved Player.

“MSA’s volleyball team did an amazing job of working together throughout the season,” Dvorak said. “They constantly represented MSA with pride and displayed various principles of the ADL lifestyle.”

Next season, Dvorak hopes the Illinois Institute of Technology volleyball team will provide mentors for her players.

Soccer

The Joslin middle school boys soccer team lacked experience but not a strong work ethic. Many of its 13 participants were first-year players, accounting partly for its 0-3 record. But according to coach Kenneth Borre, those athletes “improved drastically through hard work and perseverance.”

Borre’s top player was 8th-grade goalie Raphael Hutchins. The highlight of the season, Borre said, was “our shut-out breaking goal against St. Procopius.”

Borre’s goal for next year is to “win at least one match in the St. Procopius League.”

PCS Cross Country reaches regionals, Soccer focuses on fundamentals

Perspectives Leadership Academy/Perspectives High School of Technology’s first venture into boys and girls interscholastic cross country was an immediate success this fall.

Four of coach Rod Stephen’s seven girls and four of his five boys advanced beyond their Illinois High School Association regional meet to the sectional

level.

Senior captain Ryan Daniels led the boys team. Freshman La Mona Rocquemore led the girls team. Senior Jovannie Spears was its captain.

Stephen hopes his teams can place in the top 10 in the Chicago Public League championships next season. He praised this year’s runners.

“It takes a lot of heart to play

any sport,” he said, “but it also takes determination and will to run cross country. We had a great group of kids this cross country season.”

Soccer

The Perspectives Joslin boys soccer team played no games in its first season this fall as coach Rachel Urista focused on teaching her dozen or so play-

ers the sport’s fundamentals.

“The highlight was seeing the players learn the basic skills and having them create new friendships and seeing wonderful teamwork and support in action,” she said.

Urista’s goal for next season is to have her team ready to play a complete schedule of games.

Relationship with CYSA gives student-athletes development opportunities

Continued from Page 1

two Positive Coaching Alliance coaching development workshops.

This productive relationship began when CYSA President Eric Kieras and PCS Athletic Director Vinay Mullick met through a mutual friend. Kieras was impressed with Perspectives' mission and Mullick's vision for its athletic program and offered CYSA's help.

"Vinay showed interest in developing a deeper partnership with CYSA, and we jumped at the opportunity," Kieras said. "As you know, Chicago schools, whether charter, public or private, face incredible challenges. It isn't every day that you can find someone like Vinay, who is dedicated to improving the lives of these children."

The new Perspectives Charter Schools Middle School Flag Football League featured teams from Perspectives Joslin, Perspectives/IIT Math & Science Academy and Perspectives Middle Academy. The co-ed league, which ran on Saturdays from Sept. 17 through Oct. 8 at MSA, had 80 players from grades 6 through 8.

MSA and PSA have had flag football teams for several years. Joslin formed a team because of the new league and finished third in it. PMA won the league title, with MSA second.

About 30 athletes from the same three middle schools participated in the co-ed fall basketball clinic, which was in its second year. It took place for five Saturdays at the Auburn Gresham campus. CYSA, which bought T-shirt uniforms for the flag football league, provided equipment and coaching stipends for the basketball camp.

CYSA also sponsored a visit to Northwestern University for about 25 Perspectives Middle Academy students. The students toured the campus and watched football practice. NU head coach Pat Fitzgerald and some Wildcat assistant coaches and players spoke to them afterward.

"It was just a pretty cool event for them to see a Big Ten stadium and see what it's like to be a student-athlete and hear coaches and players talk about the

importance of academics and athletics," Mullick said.

"CYSA's support of our fall program was tremendous," he added. "Their support enabled us to continue and expand programming from previous years, while also allowing us to offer new programs such as our flag football league."

Kieras said CYSA hopes eventually to provide full funding and support for at least one sports program a season, provide two to three visits a year to colleges, sporting events and the like and provide Perspectives high school athletes more opportunities to act as mentors to PCS middle school athletes.

"The relationship with PCS is only in its infancy," he said, "but we have made great strides in only a few short months."

Mullick welcomes the prospect of having CYSA "support more of our programs and impact more of our student-athletes."

"We are very thankful of the partnership we have with CYSA," he said, "and we look forward to continuing the relationship in the years to come."

PCS coaches participate in leadership workshops

Students aren't the only ones getting an education at Perspectives Charter Schools. PCS coaches increasingly are learning through professional development opportunities.

This fall, about 50 high school and middle school coaches received invaluable training through the highly respected Positive Coaching Alliance, a national not-for-profit organization committed to providing all young athletes a positive, character-building sports experience.

Thanks to support from the Chicago Youth Sports Alliance, PCA put on 90-minute workshops Sept. 30 and Dec. 9, giving PCS coaches who rarely get together the chance to interact and share ideas.

"I thought the training was very helpful," Perspectives Leadership Academy/Perspectives High School of Technology softball coach Susan Mazur said. "It was nice to get together with a group of coaches eager to learn and share different methods of coaching. It allowed me time to stop

and reflect on making my practices better."

Perspectives Athletic Director Vinay Mullick agreed.

"CYSA support has been huge in bringing professional development opportunities for our coaches," he said. "The neatest thing is to see the collaboration among the coaches, and PCA did a great job fostering that. They realize they all have the same issues.

"A lot of coaches liked the ways other coaches were dealing with kids and teams.

They were sharing best practices and what teams were successful at and how they got kids to succeed."

A central part of the PCA philosophy is that winning is a worthwhile goal but needs to be pursued properly.

"I was most impressed by how the program stressed winning through integrity and not just winning for your record," Mazur said. "It made me think about my perception of winning and how I can grow as a coach."