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Gold Mine

Defenseman Max Schmidt is the latest talented player from a secret formerly known as Upper Arlington

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by Paul Ohanian, Lacrosse Magazine Online Staff

Upper Arlington High School boys' lacrosse coach Ted Wolford takes pride in the fact that his Ohio school is known for more than just being Jack Nicklaus' alma mater.

Granted, with a nickname like the Golden Bears, UA sports teams are always connected to the greatest golfer in history. But many of Wolford's lacrosse proteges have made their own headlines.

Count them. There are currently 24 UA grads on college rosters, ranging from Brown to Delaware, Virginia to Loyola. Three others were planning on suiting up for Butler this year before that school dropped the sport.

Among the recent grads, Brett Hughes and Mark Koontz were highly-decorated defensemen at Virginia, Brian Yontz was a captain at Ohio State and Steve Dusseau finished as a three-time All-American at Georgetown before also earning a spot on the 2002 U.S. men's team.

"One of the keys to UA's success is that they are getting some of the best athletes at their school to play lacrosse," said Dom Starsia, head coach at the University of Virginia. "They're competitive kids who don't want to be standing on the sidelines."

Upper Arlington, located just outside Columbus, has become a mandatory recruiting stop for virtually every significant college program in the country.

"The players that have gone out from here have opened doors for others," said Wolford. "There are lots of great athletes all over the country."

The latest in UA's distinguished line is Max Schmidt, generally regarded as one of the premier high school defensemen in the nation this year.

The 6-foot-3, 225-pound senior is a three-year varsity player who earned all-state honors in 2006 and also excelled on the UA football team.

"Max has a lot of God-given ability, including things like height and speed that you can't coach," said Wolford. "He also has a great attitude. He wants to work and he wants to learn. Those qualities help him tremendously."

Due partly to the influence of Gavin Webb, a former Terrapin defenseman and a longtime family friend, Schmidt hoped that Maryland would be among the college options for his lacrosse future.

"I grew up loving Maryland," said Schmidt, 18. "Because of Gavin, who was a role model to me, it was the only college that I really knew."

Schmidt was courted by several schools and visited a handful before narrowing down his choices to Virginia, North Carolina, Johns Hopkins and Maryland. He committed to the Terps last fall.

"I didn't want to close any doors with other schools that were interested in me, and all were awesome places to visit, but Maryland just had it all," he said.

In addition to preparing his players for the next competitive level, Wolford, now in his 16th year as UA's head coach, has tried to foster a good relationship with college coaches to pave the way for his players. He provides worksheets to coaches who inquire about specific individuals, and encourages players to attend summer camps where they will get additional exposure.

The fact that Upper Arlington's athletic program has a rich history of success across the board -- with 122 state championships in all sports -- doesn't hurt in the exposure game either. Nor does the fact that UA students, both athletes and non-athletes alike, are generally well-prepared academically for college life. The school has had the highest number of National Merit semifinalists among Ohio's public high schools in three of the past four years.

"I've had a lot of good experiences with college coaches," Wolford said. "I've met many of them through clinics or through recruiting. I think many of them know that the kids coming out of UA are well prepared for college and are competitive athletes."



From the Ashes: Why UA coach Ted Wolford has a new appreciation for the sidelines. Click [here](#).

Schmidt is proud of the fact that his school is now well regarded among many of his lacrosse peers. He attended the prestigious Jake Reed Camp, as well as the STX Shootout last summer. Many of the other campers had heard of the Upper Arlington program, but were surprised to learn that it's located in Ohio.

"They knew about UA, even though they didn't know where we are located," said Schmidt.

With his college choice now locked away, Schmidt is focusing on the season at hand in hopes of adding further to the rich UA tradition, which includes eight state titles during Wolford's tenure. He says that looking ahead to next year is not a problem, with the Bears opening their bid for a fourth consecutive state title March 28 at home against Thomas Worthington.

"I'm just thinking about high school right now, and focusing on Upper Arlington lacrosse," he said. "I try to be a leader for this team, both on and off the field. We've had a good offseason and worked very hard. I'm focused and ready to go. I want to play. It's what I do for fun."

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Maryland-bound defenseman Max Schmidt is the latest coveted recruit out of Upper Arlington in Ohio. (Photo: Gary Gardiner)

Check back to LMO throughout the high school season for more national coverage by writer Paul Ohanian, including a weekly notebook that launches March 21. Submit your high school's news and notes to gpoohanian@uslacrosse.org.