

LUCKY NUMBER SEVEN

Girls lacrosse team passes down jersey number with special significance



LEFT: Senior Raegan Helm wears the number seven jersey while cheering on the Ladue girls lacrosse team April 12. Since 2019, the jersey has been awarded to the player that best embodies leadership and excellence on the team. “Raegan is an excellent example of what number seven represents because she is willing to go the extra mile for the lacrosse team,” former teammate Grace Hensley said. (Photo illustration by Ginger Schulte & Ryan Tung)

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As senior Raegan Helm pulled on her jersey for the first girls lacrosse game of the season March 31, she smiled in the mirror. Underneath the white Ladue lettering, the number seven shined, ready to be worn another year. Although this number may look ordinary, it holds a strong significance within the culture of the girls lacrosse program.

The number seven first gained significance due to Kaylon Buckner, a current lacrosse player for Arizona State University who graduated from Ladue in 2018. During her high school career, Buckner gained numerous accolades, including being a four time all-state selection and breaking the Missouri state high school record for most career goals with a total of 379.

“She changed the culture of the Ladue Lacrosse program,” head coach Kelly McGovern said. “She was a humble leader that worked harder than anyone else, rallied her teammates to rise to the occasion and played high school lacrosse the right way.”

After Buckner graduated, the lacrosse coach at the time, Tyler Smith, decided to honor Buckner’s legacy by awarding the number seven jersey to a player that best exemplifies her leadership qualities. Starting in 2019,

the number was worn by Grace Hensley during her junior and senior year.

“I was proud to wear it because I felt that I was representing something bigger than myself,” Hensley said. “Lacrosse is a team sport, and being recognized in such a special way really meant a lot. But, it also reminded me that I was just one number on a field of many.”

After Hensley graduated in 2021, McGovern became the new head coach and inherited the responsibility of choosing the new number seven. McGovern wanted to pick someone that exhibits a team-first mentality, leads by example on and off the field and inspires those around them. McGovern chose senior Raegan Helm to carry on the legacy.

“I don’t want to know all the time, but when I see it, I’m like ‘oh that number looks good on me,’” Helm said. “It’s an honor to have it, especially knowing that there are so many other people on the team it could have gone to because we have such a great team.”

At every practice and game, Helm draws inspiration from Buckner and Hensley’s leadership. Helm describes herself as “the encouraging and loud” captain, and enjoys getting everyone involved to help them reach their full potential.

“Raegan is the definition of the leader you want within a program,” McGovern said. “She is hard working and is constantly challenging herself to be better. She has the ability to motivate her teammates to rise to the occasion, is coachable and is consistently changing the culture of Ladue lacrosse for the better.”

“Number seven [is] not just about how you play, it’s about how you are on the team.”

RAEGAN HELM | SENIOR

McGovern hopes to keep this tradition alive for years to come. After Helm graduates this year, she will pass the number to the next player who she feels best embodies the leadership qualities of Buckner, Hensley and Helm while also putting their own unique spin on the number’s legacy.

“It’s so special to me that Coach Smith started this tradition, knowing I might have the slightest impact on younger girls and their love of the game,” Buckner said. “I want the girls that are chosen to wear the number seven know that it doesn’t matter how many goals you score or how many games you win, but if you work your hardest and compete and continue to love the game, it will pay off and you will make memories that last forever. Everyone on the team matters regardless of the number on your back.”