

Student Ambassador Spotlight: Mikayla Blakes of Rutgers Prep

Mikayla Blakes is one of the top basketball players in the state, so talented that she is being recruited by many of the top national college programs.

As good as she is on the court, the junior from Rutgers Prep is a whole lot more. On the athletic side, she's devoted to more than just hoops - she also runs cross country in the fall. And academically, she's a high honor student and a leader within her school.

A 5-9 guard, Mikayla was chosen All-State First Team by NJ.com both last year and this past winter. She's already scored 1,370 career points, and this year averaged 22 points, 4.8 rebounds, 3.3 assists and 3.2 steals for her team that was runner-up in the Non-Public B state tournament after winning the championship in 2022. She's scored in double figures in 34 straight games dating back to her sophomore season.

Still, it's her well-rounded nature which helps set her apart.

"I love being a multi-sport player," she said. "Running cross country helps me prepare and condition for the basketball season and also bond with my basketball teammates that also run. It also helps me build my mental resilience and find strategies to push myself to the finish line and strive for PRs."



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She also enjoys the fact that each sport brings out a different mindset.

"While there are things in common across both sports, there is a shift in mindset from a team-focused sport to one that is more individually based," she said.



Mikayla Blakes (right) with Rutgers Prep Girls Basketball Coach Mary Klinger (left) and NJSIAA Executive Director Colleen Maguire (center)

Mikayla's talent, desire and perspective, along with her impressive academic status, made her an ideal candidate to become a NJSIAA Student Ambassador. She applied last year, and was one of 19 student athletes from around the state who were chosen to attend meetings with NJSIAA administration while serving as a voice for the state's 283,000 high school athletes.

Mikayla lists several things she hopes that the group can help accomplish during their term - among them finding ways to strengthen areas that are going well, identify ways to solve at least two areas of opportunity or elevation, and to look at ways to drive even greater inclusion and equity.

A number of things have interested her in the meetings thus far, including listening and learning

perspectives across various sports, being a part of shaping solutions and having the opportunity to drive change where needed, all while having an overall appreciation for the open and honest dialogue.

“This role provides a great leadership opportunity and allows me to give back to our sports community and be a change agent,” she said. “It also allows me to provide a voice on behalf of our athletes, and also meet peers from across New Jersey.”



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Getting to know Student Ambassador Mikayla Blakes:

Favorite subjects: “I love Math and the aspects of problem solving. Advanced Photography has brought out my creative side and reminds me that there is beauty in the small things in life.”

Favorite Athlete: Her brother Jaylen, who plays basketball for Duke University.

“For his leadership, work ethic, skill, resilience and competitive spirit.”

Favorite team: “All of the women’s basketball teams, college and WNBA.”

Do you have any superstitions or pre-game rituals?

“I listen to music to get me mentally ready, and pray for all those playing to remain injury free, that we do our best, and that we get a W.”



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How do you spend time on the bus on the way to an away game?

“Connecting with my teammates, laughing, eating our pre-game meal and strategizing for the game.”

Favorite food: Sushi.

Favorite lunch at school: Pasta.

The best thing about my school is...? “The closeness of the RPS community, school spirit, how we support each other and how the school embraces and celebrates us for who we are and fosters an inclusive culture.”

What’s your favorite thing about being a high school athlete? “The opportunity to lead, collaborate and compete while using my natural talent and representing Rutgers Prep, young women and the State of New Jersey.”

What’s the best quality in a teammate? “A teammate that is trustworthy, and will both cheer me on and challenge/push me to my full potential.”

What’s been your proudest moment so far as a student? “Achieving Honors with Distinction as a freshman and sophomore.”

Do you have a favorite sports memory? “Winning the state championship.”

Is there a sport you don’t play but would some day like to try? Tennis.

Have you ever met anyone famous? “Breanna Stewart at a basketball camp.”

If you could have a super power, what would it be and why? “Teleportation, to get to places faster since I travel quite a bit.”

If there were 25 hours in a day, what would you do with the extra hour? “A basketball workout.”

What are the best places you’ve ever traveled to? “Barcelona and Aruba.”

Do you have any pets? “No, but I plan to get a dog soon.”

Do you have a career ambition yet? “A career in the healthcare field.”



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