



Triple Threat

On the court with three amazing Manasquan sisters who each reached basketball stardom on their own terms.

BY MOLLY MECHLER

Manasquan is renowned for its strong athletic programs, and many Manasquan High School graduates have gone onto impressive collegiate athletic careers. But in the incredibly competitive world of professional sports, only the best of the best athletes ever takes their abilities to the big leagues. Remarkably, one Manasquan family has defied these odds, with two sisters playing professional basketball and a third coaching women's basketball at a prestigious university.

Roy and Patti Mabrey, both former basketball players themselves, raised five remarkable children, each with their own impressive accomplishments. Roy and Patti's three daughters, Michaela, Marina and Dara, have truly made a name for themselves in the basketball world, carrying on their family legacy and reaching new heights of their own.

Michaela, the oldest of the three Mabrey sisters, attended Manasquan High School from 2010 to 2012, playing basketball

her junior and senior years. During her senior year, she led her team to a state championship and was named the Gatorade New Jersey Girls Basketball Player of the Year.

Following high school, Michaela earned a full scholarship to the University of Notre Dame, where she continued her prestigious career, winning games, setting records and making a name for herself in the sport. After graduating Notre Dame in 2016, Michaela returned to the team in 2019 as an assistant coach.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE MABREY FAMILY



Opposite page: The Mabrey sisters, Marina, Dara and Michaela. This page: Michaela and Dara celebrate a win together at Notre Dame. Parents Roy and Patty Mabrey visit a Syracuse game with Michaela and Dara. Michaela supporting Dara through injury and hardship.

Sister Act

Marina, the Mabrey's second oldest daughter, is three years younger than Michaela. Growing up, the two sisters spent many years playing together. Marina played at Manasquan High School for three of her four seasons, where she continued to cement the Mabrey name in record books. During her high school career, Marina won three state championships, including once as a freshman, playing alongside her older sister. In 2015, Marina was also named the Gatorade New Jersey Girls Basketball Player of the Year.

Following in her sister's footsteps, Marina earned a full scholarship to the University of Notre Dame, where she played with Michaela for one season. During her career at Notre Dame, Marina started every game and even won the 2018 NCAA Championship.

After graduating in 2019, Marina was drafted by the Los Angeles Sparks in the second round, beginning her professional basketball journey. She currently plays in the WNBA for the Connecticut Sun. As of this writing, Marina is enjoying the off-season and playing in the inaugural season of Unrivaled, a 3-on-3 league based in Miami, Florida.

Dara, the youngest of the Mabrey sisters, is three years younger than Marina. Like her older sisters, Dara made an immediate impact on the basketball court. As a freshman, she played alongside Marina and helped propel the team to a state championship victory. And just like her two older sisters, Dara was named Gatorade New Jersey Girls Basketball Player of the Year, in 2017 and 2018.

After high school, Dara committed to Virginia Tech but transferred after one year. In 2019, she joined her sister, assistant coach

Michaela, at Notre Dame. Unfortunately, Dara's time playing for her sister and the Irish was cut short due to an injury, but she remained a supportive presence on the sidelines, cheering her teammates on.

Following a period of surgeries and rehabilitation, Dara has triumphantly found her way back to the basketball court. She currently plays in the Hungarian Basketball League and hopes to make it to the WNBA to play alongside Marina, who remains a huge source of inspiration.

The Desire to be Great

"I had the opportunity to coach Marina and Dara at Manasquan but also got to know Michaela through my experience with her younger sisters," says Manasquan Girls Basketball Coach Lisa Kukoda. "What was most special about the Mabreys was their competitive nature. You often hear the quote, 'Winners hate to lose more than they love to win.' And this could not be more true of their mental approach to the game."

Kukoda continues: "A lot of people see their performance on the floor and are amazed by how talented they are. But that performance is the result of an unbelievable amount of hard work. When they get in the gym, it is with the purpose of getting better every single day. There is no wasted effort or time. It is a lot of extra hours, extra dedication and a desire to be great. I had such a great experience getting to coach Marina and Dara, and I truly enjoy getting to see their success as they continue their careers."

Although the Mabrey sisters don't have the opportunity to play together as often as they used to, their bond remains as strong as ever. They stay connected through daily texts, calls and FaceTime calls. And when life brings them in different directions, they remain bonded by a shared love of the sport—because in this family, basketball is always in season.

Molly Mechler is a dedicated mother, seasoned educator, avid reader, recreational runner, thrifty shopper and local beach lover infused with a visionary mind for writing.



Top: Marina and Dara celebrating Marina's 2018/2019 national championship at Notre Dame. Left: Dara Mabrey on the court at Virginia Tech. In 2018, Marina and Dara played against each other, during Dara's first season at Virginia Tech.



ONE ON ONE:

Catching up with Dara Mabrey on growing up in Manasquan and her outstanding basketball career.

How did you get into basketball?

The first place I went as a newborn was a basketball gym. My mom left the hospital and headed straight there. My siblings were there training.

What was it like playing for Manasquan?

At Manasquan, there was a sense of love and family. I had the privilege of playing with people I had grown up with, and the community was so involved. I remember the town parades, with people standing in the cold, cheering us on. It was about more than just basketball; it was about representing my town and feeling that deep connection with everyone around me.

How did it feel to be coached by your big sister?

At Notre Dame, playing for my sister was an incredible experience. We really made the player-sister/coach dynamic work. I couldn't have done it without Michaela. We knew how and when to leave it on and off the court. She was always there for me. When I got injured, she was by my side, helping me through it and guiding me.

Where are you playing now?

Playing professionally in the Women's Basketball Hungarian League. I'm 45 minutes outside of Budapest, and it's been amazing to fully recover and get back on the court. This is my first season playing here, and I'm lucky to have a friend from

Notre Dame and her sister on the team. Even though I'm so far from home, it's crazy how small the world feels. I always see people I recognize or know, which makes it feel a little less far from where I've been.

If you weren't playing basketball, what would you be doing?

If I weren't playing basketball, I'd be focused on a career in sports commentary. After having surgery, I got to commentate for men's and women's volleyball. I absolutely loved it. Public speaking and sportscasting come naturally to me, and I realized how much I enjoy them.

In the future, I see myself living in a big city, broadcasting for a major team, and of course, continuing to embrace life with excitement. I imagine getting married, starting a family and having a career that lets me enjoy the best of both worlds. Hopefully, my success will lead me to a point where I can have a home at the Jersey Shore.

Who is your favorite basketball player of all time?

Kobe Bryant. Early on, he had a clear vision for women's basketball and his dedication to the game extended beyond just playing. He inspired a new generation, especially through his bond with his daughter, Gianna. On top of that, he was an incredible player, a legend.

Any plans for retirement?

I want to play until my body can't handle it anymore. My goal is to reach the WNBA and play with my sister at that level for as long as I can. I'm all about keeping a glass-half-full mindset, going with the flow and letting life surprise me.