

SCORES • COLLEGE MEN • COLLEGE WOMEN • HIGH SCHOOL • PRO

INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS

[Home](#) | [National Top 25](#) | [News/Archive](#)

December 19, 2014



Hae Min Lee's Lacrosse Story

Former Woodlawn (Md.) High standout's 1999 murder revisited in 'Serial,' the NPR podcast drawing millions of downloads

by Matt White | [LaxMagazine.com](#) | [Twitter](#)

» Former Teammate Remembers Hae Min Lee

It's been 16 years since Kristina Mahone scored her first goal for Woodlawn High, but the memory remains vivid.

For one, it was the only goal she scored in her two-year career as a Warrior.

"I wasn't the most awesome player," said Mahone, who was then Kristina Crouse.

Second, it mattered. It probably wasn't a game-winner — her memory fails her here — but it came late in a road game the Warriors won by one goal. It was one of just two victories all year.

But mostly Mahone remembers it — the pass, the catch, the way the net jumped when the ball hit the back of the goal — because her friend Hae Min Lee made it happen.

Before the play, Mahone said, "She told me, 'Be ready, this is gonna be your goal.' She was determined I was going to make a goal before my year was over."

MORE HEADLINES

- » [LI Yellow Jackets Rule US Lacrosse National Championships](#)
- » [Photo Gallery: US Lacrosse Girls' Championships](#)
- » [Season Rewind: Dwyer Named Midwest Player of the Year](#)
- » [Season Rewind: Ehle Named Northeast Region Player of Year](#)
- » [Season Rewind: Szynal is Mid-Atlantic Region Player of Year](#)
- » [Season Rewind: West Girls' POY Neff Leads Novato's Perfect Year](#)
- » [Season Rewind: McBride Named South Region Player of the Year](#)
- » [Eden Prairie's Morton Named Epoch/LM HSG Player of Week](#)
- » [Nike/LM HS Girls' National Top 25, Regional Top 10s](#)
- » [Yorktown's Duff Named Epoch/LM HSG Player of Week](#)

[LOAD MORE](#)

To her many friends at Woodlawn, Lee was just "Hae," which is also how, in late 2014, a global Internet audience has come to know her. Less than a year after Lee and Mahone played for Woodlawn, Lee was murdered. Her strangled body was found in a Baltimore city park. Though neither her death nor the subsequent conviction of her classmate and former boyfriend, Adnan Syed, was covered outside of Baltimore in 1999, Lee's case has made international headlines in the last three months as the focus of the wildly popular podcast, **"Serial."**

The show, led by journalist Sarah Koenig, spent a year reinvestigating Lee's death, unearthing doubts that Syed was her killer. "Serial" has been a monster hit. Each episode has been downloaded more than a million times. Blogs and message boards have sprung up where fans rehash evidence and share theories. The podcast's 12th and final episode was released Thursday.

As noted several times on "Serial," both Lee and the prosecution's key witness, known on the show only as "Jay," played lacrosse at Woodlawn. As "Serial" has unwound, Lee's teammates have reconnected over social media, many for the first time since high school, remembering her vibrant personality, on-field competitive streak and fierce loyalty to friends.

Mahone credited Lee entirely for the one goal she scored in her high school career. With the game tied, Lee carried the ball behind the goal, then drove toward the crease for a shooting angle, a play several teammates recalled as Lee's signature move. When a defender slid over to stop her, Lee flipped the ball to Mahone.

"It was the quickest shot I ever made," Mahone said. "It wasn't like I had to run. She did the bulk of the work."

Both girls erupted in celebration.

"It was just seconds, but the best seconds of my life that I won't forget," Mahone said. "She was as excited as I was. We both jumped up and down for like three minutes."

While Lee was a top scorer for the girls, the best player on Woodlawn's better-established boys' team was Terence Dorsey.

"Hae was so cool," Dorsey said. "Everybody in that school liked her. The thugs, the knuckleheads, the football players, the nerds — everybody liked her. She reached out to everybody."



GIRLS' VARSITY LACROSSE TEAM: TOP ROW: Michelle Duckett (99), Nina Philipsen (99), Jessica Perkins (99), Tavia Johnson (01), Kathryn Arnildt (99), Kristina Crouse (99), Stacey Walton (99), Megan Mattson (99), Diane Knott (99). BOTTOM ROW: Tori Stanton (99), Asha Pittman (99), Kristen Arnildt (98), Hae Lee (99).

Thanks to "Serial," former Woodlawn (Md.) High girls' lacrosse teammates have reconnected in remembrance of Hae Min Lee, whose 1999 murder is the subject of the popular NPR podcast that concluded Thursday.

Dorsey led the state in scoring in 1998, and went on to play at Maryland after an All-American junior college career.

"This may sound kinda funny, but she was, like, real annoying, but very much liked," Dorsey said. "One of the guys on our team had brand new Timberlands. She would purposely walk up to him first thing in the morning and just stomp on his feet. He wouldn't like it, but everybody else thought it was so hilarious, myself included."

Lee also liked to play matchmaker.

"If a girl on their team had a crush on one of the guys on our team, she was like the spokesman," Dorsey said. "She tried to hook everybody up with everybody."

"You could be at your lowest point, having the worst day and this girl could make you laugh," said Stacey Walker, then Stacey Walton, one of Lee's teammates. "A few days before she went missing, we had a lacrosse meeting in the library. She and I decided it would be funny for us to sit on top of the tables."

Susie Twigg played at Woodlawn in the 1970s and was the team's assistant coach in 1998. She characterized Lee's drive and fierce competitiveness with a term of endearment from her own playing days.

"My high school coach used to call that a tick. She was a real tick. She wouldn't let go no matter what," Twigg said. "She was tenacious."

Though located just a few miles outside of lacrosse-crazy Baltimore, Woodlawn struggled to fill its roster in 1998 and occasionally played with as few as 12 players, according to *The Baltimore Sun's* coverage. Players and coaches actively recruited friends and classmates at Woodlawn, most of whom had never played the game.

Hae Min Lee Rare Interview

Nov 24, 2014

Hae Min Lee speaks about her athletic involvement at Woodlawn (Md.) High. Lee was murdered in 1999, a case recently brought to light in the NPR podcast, "Serial."

Twigg's daughter, Kate Arrildt, was a freshman in 1998. Like Lee and several other players, Arrildt was at Woodlawn for a small academic magnet program, a status that made it even trickier to navigate the ninth-grade social minefield.

But once the lacrosse season started, Arrildt said, Lee found her.

"I would say that she loved lacrosse, but it would be just as true to say she loved everything," Arrildt said in a long **email response to an inquiry about Lee**. "She was hell-bent on bringing you along for the ride."

Despite being two years ahead of her, Arrildt said, Lee offered her "warmth and safety" at Woodlawn.

"She was just beautiful," Arrildt said. "She made every play look like it was choreographed — like the defenders knew just when to make a dangerous lunge, but let her squeak by with a perfect little twist, leaving her free and clear and making her skirt flair out in model-like fashion."

Lee loved to attack from behind the goal.

"She would plunge right up to [a] waiting defender until they were almost nose-to-nose and then turn her shoulders with a casual flick," Arrildt said. "It looked like she was throwing a little fake, until you saw the ripple in the top corner of the net and realized she had scored. Again."

Lee's teammates have few memories of Jay, the key witness in Syed's murder trial who was a senior in 1998, beyond his hair, which several said he wore in an Afro style and often dyed.

But Donnie Brown, Woodlawn's boys' coach, remembered Jay as "the kind of player who would run through a wall for you." Brown is a well-known figure in Baltimore lacrosse circles for promoting the game in low-income neighborhoods. He also played on the 1981 Morgan State team that reached the NCAA Division II semifinals, the best tournament run of any team from an historically black college.

At Woodlawn, Brown said, Jay was like many of his players who had not played before high school. Fewer still could afford the required equipment. But as a sales rep for STX, Brown said he convinced the company to outfit both the boys' and girls' teams with full equipment, based on local investment incentives for low-income neighborhoods.

"We got the equipment and they got the tax break," Brown said.

Dorsey, who had played since fourth grade before arriving at Woodlawn in 1998, said Jay welcomed him. "He was very supportive, and excited about me transferring and us playing together," Dorsey said. "He was our best defensive player, and he was a good teammate."

And while the women did not know as much about Jay, they knew Syed well. They recalled him as quiet and kind, well liked and popular.

Twigg, who hasn't followed "Serial" and didn't know doubts had surfaced about Syed's guilt, remembered his conviction. "I was horrified because he was a boy who would come to all of our games and some of our practices," she said. "It did seem, um, odd."

Odd that he watched practice?

"No," Twigg clarified. "I thought that was kind of wonderful. It wasn't like he was stalking or anything, He was there being supportive. I thought it was odd that he could have killed her. It was unfathomable."

Del Hughes was Woodlawn's head coach. A career football coach who has three daughters, Hughes began coaching girls' lacrosse just a few years before Lee's death.

"If we had more people like Hae, things would have gone a little better," he said. "Some of the kids got a little discouraged. But no matter what happened on the field, you could get pepped up by how Hae reacted."

Hughes related to the team more as a father figure than a gruff football coach, his former players said. Lee's death shocked him.

"It was very devastating, because she was such a bright spot," he said.

One of "Serial's" most memorable segments recounts Lee's junior prom, which Koenig pegs as the beginning of her romance with Syed. Sometime that night, Lee posed for a traditional prom picture. She gave Hughes and several teammates wallet-sized copies.

Through every coaching job he has had since, Hughes has kept the photo in his desk.

"Every so often, I'll be moving stuff around and see it and think, 'Wow,'" he said. "She was so much fun."

There's one problem with the picture, though.

Lee isn't smiling.

"I can't really even remember what she looks like without a huge grin on her face," Arrildt said.

There is one element of the prom picture Arrildt remembered well: her very non-Hae high heels.

"She wore the awful things to school every single day for two weeks," Arrildt said. "I remember standing outside on a particularly frigid early spring morning and laughing as I looked up into [her] grin — only it was elevated about six inches."

comments powered by Disqus

©2014; Copyright US Lacrosse, Inc.
2 Loveton Circle | Sparks, MD 21152
Telephone: 410.235.6882 | Fax: 410.366.6735
E-mail: | About LM | Contact