



**Our middle school students have been ranting and raving about him! Here's your chance to get to know our new middle school gym teacher, PJ Strebel, and hear more about his new baby boy!**

**We have been so excited to have you working with our middle school students this year! What are some of the things you have been focusing on with them?**

The older group is working hard on building strength! When we are stronger, we are not only less susceptible to injuries but we can run faster, jump higher, and work longer. A main focus of ours is single leg strength and stability which can dramatically decrease non-contact knee injuries. And above all of that, we are teaching the kids how to trust the process of putting in consistent work towards a specific goal. Strength training can also boost self-confidence, self-esteem, and mental toughness!

The younger groups are more of a play-based group with a focus on movement exploration, coordination development, being a positive member and contributor of a team, how to work hard as a group, and how to have fun while being active! We play a lot of balance games and relay races, tag games, and obstacle courses!

**How has the partnership been with Saint Patrick Academy?**

Working with SPA has been an amazing experience! The students and faculty have been so welcoming and supportive of our new partnership! The smaller class sizes have created relationships between the kids that remind me of my middle school years.

**When did your interest in fitness start? Where did you go to high school? Did you play sports? What kind of a student were you?**

I grew up in a very small town in western NH called Newport. It is right in the foothills of Mt. Sunapee. At a very young age I started with gymnastics. That was my first experience with being active and getting stronger! I was a gymnast for about 9 years until team sports took over. All while growing up I played football, basketball, and baseball. I was a 3 sport varsity athlete for my 10-12th grade years. I was a quarterback and linebacker, a first baseman and a

pitcher, and a post player in basketball! Coming from a small town, every boy athlete had to play other sports or we wouldn't have been able to field a team. Playing multiple sports and trying new activities was always happening in my life. I have been snowboarding for about 20 years now, starting through a school ski program in 3rd grade. I started weight training the summer before my freshman year of high school. I was taught by two of my best friend's fathers. These were some of the best memories of my life, and unfortunately, I lost both of these friends in separate accidents. This is what ultimately drives me to create a program where we can bring kids together and create friendships and memories through strength and conditioning.

I was an honor roll student who enjoyed science and english more than math and social studies. I played the baritone saxophone in the concert and jazz bands through middle and high school and wish I still played!

### **Did you continue to play any sports in college?**

I attended Thomas College, in Waterville, Maine after high school where I played lacrosse. I had never touched a lacrosse stick until I arrived the fall of my freshman year. I was ready for a new challenge and lacrosse presented it. I quickly took up the game practicing endlessly and learning the game. I was a starter before the first game of the season and held that position as a defender and long stick midfielder for 4 years, ending my career as a team captain and holding the record for most points scored by a defenseman. I started coaching lacrosse at the high school level at Winnacunnet, and coached for a year at Timberlane High School before coaching middle school at Berwick Academy for 2 years.

### **What were the biggest lessons you learned by playing sports?**

The lessons learned while playing sports are very similar to those learned while strength training. Hard work, determination, focusing on the process more than the outcome and being a teammate. Being able to be a positive member of a group is largely important for the success in any part of your life. Mental toughness is something that sport teaches and it can translate very well to other activities.

### **You teach teen classes for personal training at Seacoast Sports Club? How did you get interested in that? and how can kids sign up?**

Yes! I have been working as a strength coach and the youth program director for almost 4 years now. We have groups ranging from elementary aged kids all the way through high school students and college athletes. I started personal training in 2011 when I wanted to be able to do more with the athletes I was coaching on the Football and lacrosse fields. From there I worked at a gym in Dover, NH and then started the Peak Performance program at Seacoast Sports Clubs. We have sessions starting every 8 weeks! Below you can find a link to a video explaining the program!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X43Q7D2ASI0>

**So, most importantly, PJ, we hear you and your wife just had your first baby? Congratulations!! What is his name and how have the first few weeks been at home?**

We did! William Robert Strebel was born on 2/22/18 at 9:07pm! He was 6lbs 11 oz and 21.25" long! Kathleen (yes the basketball referee) and William are home and happy and healthy!

The first few weeks have been a great learning experience, full of sleepless nights, an unbelievable number of cups of coffee, and some diapers! But it has been an amazing experience so far! He is a picture:

**What is the one fatherhood task you are finding the most challenging so far? What are you looking forward to the most?**

The sleepless nights have been the most challenging for me! I am a creature of habit, and love my routines, so that has been the hardest part to adjust to! I am most looking forward to hopefully doing the things I enjoy with him and teaching him how to: fish, snowboard, lift weights, throw a football! All the fun stuff that I love to do outside!