

Ridgewood's Lucie Kloak inks letter to row at North Carolina

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BY GREG TARTAGLIA
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR
THE RIDGEWOOD NEWS
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RIDGEWOOD — Lucie Kloak always envisioned herself playing a college sport on a water-based surface. She just always figured the surface would be frozen.



MARION BROWN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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Ridgewood High School senior Lucie Kloak signs her National Letter of Intent on Dec. 6 to attend the University of North Carolina on a women's rowing scholarship. Seated next to Kloak are her mother, Liz, and father, George. In the back row are, from left, former RHS Principal Jack Lorenz, RHS Co-Principal Basil Pizzuto, Lillie Kloak and RHS Guidance Counselor Dave Bailey.

Instead, the [Ridgewood](#) High School senior has opted to trade in her hockey stick for an oar, signing a National Letter of Intent to join the University of North Carolina women's rowing team at RHS Media Day on Dec. 6.

"My goal, pretty much since freshman year [at RHS], was to play hockey in college," Kloak said, no pun intended. "Then last year, my friends got me into [rowing], and I thought, 'Let me do a spring sport, just to stay in shape for hockey.'

"So everything was pretty much geared around hockey to start with, and then I just fell in love with crew," she added. "It all kind of fell into place at the end of [last] summer. I really started to develop in rowing, and I was lucky enough to have schools like North Carolina come recruit me, and I jumped right on the opportunity."

That chance came about thanks mainly to the presence of the most sought-after traits in rowing: height and reach, which Kloak has in spades. At 6-foot-2, she is but a few inches shorter than her father, George, and stands an inch or so taller than anyone on the RHS girls basketball team.

The hardwood, however, was never her element.

Almost from the beginning, hockey was the game of choice for Kloak, 18. She still plays defense for the Morristown-based N.J. Colonials Tier 1 club, and her team earned trips to the USA Hockey National Championships three years in a row from 2008 to 2010. Now, her time with the N.J. 19U girls is nearing an end.

"It's kind of sad to let it go, because I've been playing hockey since I was 3," said Kloak. "But I've done so much with hockey, and I feel like it's the kind of sport that I can always pick up again. Since I'm so new to rowing, I really want to see how good I can be – and especially at a school like UNC, I'm excited to do that."

Kloak first climbed into a boat in March 2011 with the New York Rowing Association (nyrowing.org), which has a North Jersey program based in [Elmwood Park](#), where the [Passaic](#) River forms a lake by the Dundee Dam. Last fall, she was a part of the NYRA varsity quad boat that finished first in the field of 32 at the Head of the Passaic Regatta.

North Carolina, meanwhile, closed out the autumn portion of its 2011-12 rowing season in November by logging a trio of top-12 showings at the Head of the Chattahoochee Regatta in Chattanooga, Tenn. The Tar Heels finished sixth in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) Championships last season and will resume their current campaign in March.

In the school's press release on tarheelblue.com, Carolina head coach Sarah Haney said of Kloak, "She is an extremely competitive, loyal and dedicated ice hockey player, and we look forward to watching her apply these traits to rowing here at UNC."

Kloak also looked at Virginia and Syracuse before verbally committing to North Carolina. She took her official visit to Chapel Hill the weekend of Sept. 16-18 and found just what she was seeking.

"I was looking for a competitive rowing team, of course, but I was also looking for a school that was going to challenge me — and all three schools were going to, no matter what," said Kloak, who plans to study communication and/or sociology. "But UNC was my first official visit, and I fell in love with the campus and with the people there right when I walked on it. And from then on, I was pretty much settled on where I wanted to go."

Email: tartaglia@northjersey.com