

**Sex  
week**  
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# The Lafayette

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## Coming out



Graphic by Mari Otto '17 and Jaclyn Moses '17

## Michael Sam, Jesse Klug and the prospect of a gay athlete at Lafayette

**By Michael A. Kowaleski '14**  
Editor-in-chief

On Sunday, Feb 9, Missouri football star and NFL Draft prospect Michael Sam announced that he was gay. The declaration could potentially make Sam the first openly gay active athlete to compete professionally in a "Big Four" American sport (football, baseball, basketball and hockey).

Since then, there has been extensive discourse concerning whether gay athletes can be accepted into the oft-perceived macho environment of sports.

It also begs the question about how comfortable an out-of-the-closet gay athlete would be at Lafayette.

Some indication could come from a Patriot League star athlete who, four months before Sam's announcement, made a powerful statement of his own.

In October of 2013 sophomore Jesse Klug, a Bucknell University soccer star, declared himself a gay player. But, like Sam, Klug's teammates knew about his sexual orientation well before the rest of the world did.

"I came out to my team when I first got [to Bucknell]," Klug said.

It was nonchalant to the point where Klug recalls not needing a dramatic, watershed moment where he announced it to his teammates.

"I said I had a boyfriend at a dinner [that was] just for the freshman," he said. "I never actually said that to anyone else on the team, but everyone ended up knowing."

There were very few difficulties with his teammates adapting to the news, but Klug said there was a slight adjustment concerning some coarse locker

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room terminology.

"It was not a big deal at all," the sophomore said. "There were a couple times where people would say, 'That's so gay,' and people would kind of go quiet. I wouldn't say anything, but when the person realized that there was a reason he shouldn't have said that, someone took him aside to talk with him afterwards. That happened a couple of times before people got used to it."

As of this writing, Lafayette hasn't had a high-profile gay athlete. But current players and coaches say they would hope a player would feel comfortable coming out publicly.

Out of ten Lafayette athletes and coaches, every individual interviewed stated they would expect an openly gay teammate to be accepted unconditionally.

"They would be treated no differently than any other human being on the team," women's soccer head coach Mick Statham said. "I don't see where anyone's got any right to judge the color of your skin, your gender, or who you love."

"This community is welcome to any kind of sexuality," football player Ross Scheuerman '15 said. "If the player is productive, if he's an asset to our team, there's not going to be any problem. We're going to accept him like any other teammate."

Klug said that for the most part, the response from his opponents was positive. But there was some heckling, specifically some opposing players calling him the "F-word." But Klug said that put his opponents right where he wanted them.

"While I'm focusing on the game and they do that, what are they thinking about?" he laughed. "They're focused on who I'm attracted to, and if nothing else, it's a good distraction."

One of Klug's opponents, Chuka Anyafo '17, admitted that he could understand how some would struggle deciding how to guard the standout Bucknell forward.

"I could see where someone could be like, 'whoa, how do I guard him?'" he said. "What do I do when I get up next to him?"

Anyafo said that he thinks the men's soccer team would accept a gay teammate, but it would be difficult for a player to come out at Lafayette due to the smaller size of the school.

But Lafayette coaches said that they would not entertain a lack of acceptance from a gay player's peers.

"There would be zero tolerance," men's soccer head coach Dennis Bohn said. "If there was anyone who wasn't supportive or positive of that player, they wouldn't have a place on our team."

Kristin Berger '15, softball player, said that players in some sports would have a more difficult time coming out than others. She has known gay players in the past, but said there are stigmas in her sport that make it tougher to reveal their sexual orientation.

"It makes it harder for people because you never want to be a stereotype," she said. "But it is what it is, and if you have good people around you, I think it makes it easier."

Klug's head coach, Brendan Nash, said he suspected that he had players in the past who were gay, but did not know how to handle the situation.

"We had a thought years ago that we had a gay student-athlete on the team," he said. "But I think he was very afraid to come out like Jesse did. I felt bad, because I didn't know how to let him know, 'Hey, we are here. You have a support group.'"

Football player Randall Logan '15 said that it helps that Michael Sam, the 2013-14 SEC Defensive Player of the Year, had so much success on the field.

"He's an All-American, he's the Defensive Player of the Year," he said. "That obviously has something to do with it, because you're not going to discriminate against him because he's better than most people on your team."

Like Sam, Klug is a standout athlete, named as a First-Team Patriot League selection as a forward this past year. He scored nine goals with three assists in 18 games played during this sophomore year.

There is, of course, still the distinct possibility that there is a homosexual Lafayette athlete on campus afraid to come out. To that athlete, Logan urges him or her to do what makes them most comfortable.

"If it was a problem to hide it, to hide who he was, come out," he said. "You have to do what's right for you. We'd welcome you with open arms."

### Editor's Note:

We at *The Lafayette* realize that, despite speaking to a variety of individuals, we could not possibly encapsulate every student's opinion on this sensitive matter. We encourage readers to send us a Letter to the Editor if you have anything to add to this discussion.