

Crab Feast standouts in the CClass of 2022

For multiple summers now attackman Joey Spallina (Mount Sinai) has been the standout star for Team 91 Long Island Smash.

Ranked No. 1 in the recruiting class of 2022, the Syracuse commit has quarterbacked title-winning offenses since his middle school days. When your team features a player his caliber, top defenses are going to try and shut him down so teammates must step up. In Sunday's 2022 Championship game at this year's Crab Feast Tournament held in Bel Air, Md., Team 91 stepped up and won the senior bracket with a 7-6 victory over Mesa Fresh.

With Spallina receiving Mesa Fresh's full attention, Team 91 players like midfielder Marcus Wertheim, Jameson Smith, Jack Flaherty, Brady West stood up and made plays.

"Everyone was focused on Joey, and everyone in the midfield did a great job drawing the slide. Sometimes the slides wouldn't come so we were able to bury it," said Wertheim, a natural midfielder who stepped up and played attack Sunday, scoring at least two points in the title game. "Joey's just drawing everyone so I found my way cutting off-ball and he found me open. Everyone just collectively played great on offense."

Spallina recorded an assist early in the game, feeding Wertheim across the crease off a fastbreak clear started on the opposite end by West to make it 2-1 early. Then the rest of his teammates made it happen on offense.

Team 91 took its largest lead early in the third quarter, with midfielder Alex Pfeiffer (Sachem North) scoring from the left goal line extended on an assist from attackman Anthony Mollica (Massapequa) to make it 6-3.

Mesa Fresh, composed of top players from the Philadelphia area, made a second half comeback, recorded three consecutive goals to tie it 6-6 going late into the fourth quarter. Mesa Fresh scorers in the run included attackman Avi Mehl, longpole Henry Bard and midfielder Brendan Hickey.

Team 91 notched the game-winning goal late in the fourth quarter when Brady West cut to the crease and scored on a tight feed to make it 7-6.

"We didn't have that many middles but everyone did a fantastic job of getting down the alley and drawing slides," says Wertheim. "We all just found each other and were playing together, it was great."

Team 91 LI Smash finished 6-0 in the tournament, finding its toughest competition in the championship bracket with tight wins over Mesa along with California's ADVNC 7-6 in the semifinals. Mesa Fresh beat 3D New England 8-7 in the other semifinal game.

With New York's modified championships just wrapping up this past week, Crab Feast was the first time the Team 91 players were able to get together. Once they stepped on the field though, old habits die hard.

"We were all doing our own thing before we came together, but we've been playing for a while so it was pretty easy to mesh again," says Wertheim.

Team 91 LI Smash and Mesa Fresh were among a deep field of teams that competed in the Crab Feast Sunday morning, with competitive teams hailing from across the U.S. featuring top NCAA and potential NCAA talent. Here are a few of the day's standouts.

Crab Feast 2022 Standouts

Joe Spallina, A, Mount Sinai (N.Y.)/Team 91 LI Smash

Committed to Syracuse. The No. 1 recruit in NLF Rankings' 2022 list, Spallina once again smoothly quarterbacked his team to a title victory. He dominates the real estate within a 10-yard radius around the net, attacking the cage when the matchup serves him and drawing defenders and dumping to teammates when he finds the open man. New Syracuse coach Gary Gait was in attendance to scout his future player. At this point, the fun part about watching Spallina play is guessing how he'll fit into 'Cuse's offense; will he be the Mike Leveille quarterback type, GLE facilitator more like Jeff Teat at Cornell or a tough opportunistic type like Virginia's Ian Laviano.

Marcus Wertheim, M, Smithtown East (N.Y.)/Team 91 LI Smash

Committed to Brown. Despite being a natural midfielder, Wertheim stepped up and played attack so Team 91 could keep its best offensive options on the field. He adapted well and worked both as a strong offensive out for Spallina and also as a capable scoring threat inside. He's smart, showcases a great first step with separation and knows his way around the cage.

Jack Flaherty, M, Chaminade (N.Y.)/Team 91 LI Smash

Committed to Navy. Flaherty was one of several offensive players for Team 91 who were able to take advantage of midfield opportunities in the championship game and attack down hill. Big tall guy who can shoot with power.

Jameson Smith, M, Bayport Blue Point (N.Y.)/Team 91 LI Smash

Committed to Johns Hopkins. Showcased great smarts, quick feet and tandem teamwork around the cage. Another player who served as a threat with the matchups going in Team 91's favor, foreshadowing strong team play heading into college.

Austin Oppenheim, FO/M, Mt. Sinai (N.Y.)/Team 91 LI Smash

A gritty offensive option who showcased his offensive versatility through Sunday's games. Stood out especially in the team's semifinal matchup Sunday.

Teddy Malone, A, Haverford School (Pa.)/Mesa Fresh

Committed to Harvard. Malone is tough, smart and shifty around the cage. What really stood out in Sunday's lineup though was his competitiveness. Down one in a semifinal matchup against 3d New England, Malone demanded the ball, dodged from the top of the box down the left alley, drove inside and scored the game-tying goal. Despite the score the game felt all but over at that point. That type of tenacity should catch on with coach Gerry Byrne's Crimson.

Andrew McMeekin, FO/M, Episcopal Academy (Pa.)/Mesa Fresh

Patrick Gillin, D/LSM, Haverford School (Pa.)/Mesa Fresh

McMeekin is committed to Princeton. Ranked No. 16 in NLFRankings.com's Class of 2022, McMeekin's size and skill set are apparent. He can, scrap, push the groundball and is capable on offense. Gillin stepped up as a quick, smart LSM type. These two together did an excellent job and stood out during Mesa's run.

Kyle Traynor, A, Malvern Prep (Pa.)/Mesa Fresh

Another piece that helped Mesa Fresh make it to the 2022 championship game. His quick burst of speed, down hill offense, soft hands and ability to execute an offense alongside his teammates stood out.

Chuck Cacciutti, G, Haverford School/Mesa Fresh

Cacciutti showcased quick reflexes and hand positioning on shots both on the doorstep and outside. He also worked well with his midfielders jumpstarting transition offense.

Tristan Whitaker, M, Episcopal Academy/Mesa Fresh

A smart player who understands how to get the most out of his skills. Move with purpose within the context of the offense and make timely shots.

Jimmy McCool, G, New Hampton (N.H.)/3d New England

Committed to Syracuse. A big old boy in net who gives you a lefty look and some explosiveness on saves. He can fill out the cage, move it forward and make the athletic play if needed to.

Josh Gangi, A, Nobles (Mass.)/3d New England

Gangi scored at least a goal in the semifinal matchup against Mesa Fresh. A strong presence in the middle of the offense who isn't afraid to crash inside. A quick release compliments that middle-box ability.

Camden Elmo, A, New Oxford (Md.)/MD Roughriders

An opportunistic player with a quick release and a strong surge going to the cage, especially making the cut down the right alley or across the top of the box. Wasn't afraid to challenge defenders.

Byron Newman, A, Catonsville (Md.)/MD Roughriders

Newman worked the left side of the offense for the Roughriders. He can dodge, move with a quick step to the cage or take the feed and rip the ball at a variety of angles.

Gavin Stark, A, Calvert Hall/MD Roughriders

A comfortable left option on offense. He makes intelligent decisions on and off-ball, smoothly operating from X to left GLE to topside.

Quinn Krammer, A/M, Lake Washington (Wa.)/ADVNC

Committed to Princeton. ADVNC went toe-to-toe against the championship bracket's top teams, losing to eventual winners Team 91 by just a goal in the semifinals. Krammer was one of several ADVNC players who used his size and athleticism to find separation and create scoring opportunities. It'll be interesting to see how he's positioned in Division I; he's playing attack now but his height and wheels may point to a role on midfield.

Maxwell Sloat, A/M, Sacred Heart Prep (Calif.)/ADVNC

Committed to Duke. Another player who started on attack for ADVNC but could possibly make more sense transitioning to a midfield role in college. He's a tall lefty with tremendous wheels who can attack the alley or take the feed and rip it.

Alex Loveland, A, Junipero Serra/ADVNC

Committed to High Point. Loveland has a lot of arrows in his quiver. He can dodge and shoot from out, showing particular strength on right angles, attack in the five-and-five with a variety of moves and works with skill in the context of a team offense. One of those pieces that should shine at a place like High Point.

Brody Burrell, G, Elgin Park/ADVNC

A Canadian, Burrell showcased a quick hand to the ball, making smooth and quick saves before moving to the clear. That quick hand speed and output especially worked setting up ADVNC's talented downhill offensive players.

Luke Rhoa, M, St. John's (D.C.)/Crabs 2022

Travis Smith, M, John Carroll (Md.)/Crabs 2022

Rhoa is committed to Syracuse and ranked No. 60 among the NLFRankings.com Class of 2022. While it's easy to write a list of individual accomplishments, it's also important to point out players that work well together, which potentially foreshadows good teammate qualities. Rhoa, ranked No. 60 in NLFRankings.com's Class of 2022 rankings, and Smith know each other and how to set themselves for the best offensive opportunities. They scored two goals during an early game with MD Roughriders just by reading the defense, knowing their teammates and taking advantage of opportunities. That's key.

Ian Kim, FO/M, Conestoga (Pa.)/Crabs

A telling moment for Kim was early in the day when faced a tough face-off midfielder. His opponent knew the talent and kept jumping the ball, catching two face-off warnings quickly. Once the opponent had to listen to the call, Kim was all over the ball, winning possessions consistently and moving it to his teammates quickly.

Liam McClure, M, Boys' Latin/Crabs

A strong offensive-oriented midfielder who keeps his eyes open and makes the smart decision. His skills stand out especially on broken plays and in transition.

Ryan Colsey, A, Ridgefield/Eclipse

Committed to Virginia and ranked No. 38 in the NLFRankings.com's Class of 2022. He's everything you want in a big lefty shooter. His size is noticeable, his positioning in transition is on point and he drives to the net with physicality.

Matthew Minicus, A, Darien (Conn.)/Eclipse

Committed to Loyola. Saw him notch two assists in an early game on championship day. Ranked No. 44 on the NLFRankings.com Class of 2022 list, Minicus is one of those heady players who helps the offense move but is also strong on the ride and in transition, what coaches like to see.

Carter Connors, A, New Canaan (Conn.)Eclipse

Connors can move with purpose around the cage, attacking from X to feed his teammates or make the score. He notched a great goal in traffic in an early game on championship Sunday.