

# Sports Spotlight: Vignesh Rajagopal

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Until he started high school, Vignesh Rajagopal was sure that he wanted to be a soccer player. He had been playing since he was ten years old and loved it. While in high school, his friend convinced him to try playing basketball one day and his journey with basketball began then and continues today as he plays for the Illinois Tech Men's Basketball team.

"The main reason I wanted to go to college in the U.S. was because I wanted to continue playing basketball," said Rajagopal, who grew up in a few different places around the world before graduating from high school in Mexico. His journey with basketball at Illinois Tech began before he even came to the school. He had been corresponding with the coach about the possibility of joining the team was told that there was the likelihood of a spot for him on the team when he got here. Soon after he got here in Fall 2013, he went through tryouts, made the team and has been playing for the school for the past three years.

Asked what his favorite thing about playing basketball at the school is, he easily says, "the people," adding that his teammates, coaches and other athletics staff have made

the experience what it is. Then asked about a challenge he faces on the team, he says that time management has been a skill that has challenged him. With practices starting at 6 a.m. and determined never to be late to practice, Rajagopal has had to learn to schedule the rest of his academic and personal life around his life in athletics.

Earlier this semester, Rajagopal was awarded the Student Athlete of the Year award by the United States Collegiate Athletic Association (USCAA). He says that his initial reaction was one of shock and that he "couldn't believe it."

As cocaptain of the team, Rajagopal not only uses the team's losses to make his own game better, but he also works actively to encourage his teammates to push themselves and achieve their full potential. For the past few years the team has been facing a lot of losses but Rajagopal is optimistic that this will change in the upcoming semesters. Asked what he thinks about the current state of student awareness and support of athletics on campus, Rajagopal says, "[he thinks] it's picked up this year," in comparison to his first two years at the school. He adds that the athletes themselves try to attend sporting events for other teams on campus to show support but also as an opportunity to bond with their own teams, often trying to recruit friends outside athletics

to go with them. He says, "involvement could definitely be a lot better, especially because we are transitioning into DIII and that's a pretty big deal," hoping that incentives like earning points by going to athletic events and trading them in for merchandise will help boost attendance.

Rajagopal also talked about ways that we can cultivate a culture of sports here at Illinois Tech. While he recognized that that is not a mission that can be accomplished in a short span of time, he notes, "blowing up athletics as much as we blow up our academics" to visiting prospective students may be a good way to expose them to the sense of school spirit here before they attend so that they can help maintain and improve the appreciation of athletics and our athletes on campus when they do attend.

Lastly, in response to being asked in what capacity he sees basketball in his life post college, Rajagopal says that the skills and discipline he has learned through the sport and being on the team are priceless. Being able to step back, analyze his mistakes and learn from them effectively is only one of many such skills that will help him no matter his chosen career path. He ends with a call to fellow students, saying, "come out to these games with your friends, it could be fun!"



Photo courtesy of Vignesh Rajagopal

## Illinois Tech Track and Field team competes at Benedictine University

**Genevieve Hummel**  
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The Illinois Tech men's and women's Track & Field teams competed at the Benedictine University Relays this past weekend. The weather was warm and sunny on both Friday and Saturday and Assistant Coach Nick Schneigert predicted that the team would be setting many personal records that day, and he was right. Almost all of the athletes on both the men's and women's teams broke their own personal records on their events. A notable athlete from the women's team was

Taylor Schaub, who continued to impress with her high jump marks, placing third out of 24 athletes with a mark of 1.55 meters. This was her second best collegiate mark for the high jump. Schaub also placed 49th in the 200 meter dash with a time of 30.17 seconds. Also notable was Rebecca Bell, who placed 34th in the 1500 meter with a time of 5:26.53. Sprinters Genevieve Hummel and Danielle Boer each improved their own personal times in both the 100 meter and the 200 meter dashes by at least a second. All the athletes on the women's team saw great improvements in their performances and this was an extremely successful meet for

the team.

The men's team also experienced some record-setting moments, as the 4x400 meter team finally broke the school record, a goal Coach Schneigert had been working toward all season. The team consisted of David Polzin, Cole Dammeier, John Xavier, and Demis Thomas. The team broke the school record, set in 2008, by over three seconds, with a time of 3:29.49. Joseph Yassin had another set of strong performances. He placed second in the javelin with a score of 52.60 meters, fourth in the discus, with a score of 42.87 meters, and sixth in the shot put, with a score of 13.88

meters. In the 400 meter dash, Thomas came in 14th place with a time of 52.91 seconds and Polzin came in 26th place with a time of 54.83 seconds. Dammeier, with a time of 4:14.81 came in 18th place in the 1500 meter. Xavier's time of 11.74 seconds got him a placement of 32nd in the 100 meter dash. Javier Sorribes-Camargo set three collegiate personal records with a score of 5.57 meters in the long jump, and times of 12.64 seconds in the 100 meter dash and 26.23 seconds in the 200 meter dash. All the athletes on the men's team did an exceptional job at this meet and the team continues to see improvements every week.



Photos by Genevieve Hummel

## Liverpool defeats Dortmund in "Istanbul 2005" v2.0

**Mete Morris**  
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The Champions League finale in 2005 is probably the proudest moment of any living Liverpool fan today. It was against AC Milan on a beautiful night in Istanbul. The Merseyside club were three goals down by halftime and no-one gave them a chance. AC Milan was blessed with talents such as Shevchenko, Crespo, Kafu and Maldini looked 45 minutes away from a glorious champions league, but it was the belief and immense support of the fans that gave Liverpool the drive and they made a glorious comeback, managing to force the game to penalties and clinching the cup by a legendary performance from then goalkeeper Dudek.

The game last Wednesday was a season benchmark for the Reds. Being mid-table in the league and with no hope of winning any silverware domestically, the only tournament they have a chance in is the Euro Cup. The draw saw them face possibly the strongest team in the tournament, the German club Borussia Dortmund. Liverpool did well to get a 1-1 draw from the first game away in Dortmund. The starting lineup was fairly normal with Mignolet in goal with the back

four of Clyne, Lovren, Sakho and Moreno. In front of the back four the two central midfielders were James Milner and Emre Can. In front of Milner and Can, the three attacking midfielders were Lallana, Firmino and Coutinho with the young prospective Divorick Origi as the lone striker. The game started really fast with German side Dortmund pressing high up, giving Liverpool a hard time attacking, and their pressure paid off well. Just in the fifth minute Shinji Kagawa played a brilliant pass to Gonzalo Castro who lofted the ball up behind Liverpool defenders leaving the in-form striker Aubameyang one on one with Mignolet. Although Mignolet did a fantastic job by saving Aubameyang's attempt, the ball bounced and fell in front of Henrik Mkhitaryan who netted the ball (Liverpool 0 - 1 Dortmund, 5' Mkhitaryan). Both Milner and Sakho did a poor job, just watching the attack rather than defending the Armenian midfielder. Liverpool fans' dreams of a comeback were crushed on 9th minute. Reus dribbled past the Liverpool midfield passing a long ground pass to Aubameyang. This time, the Gabonese striker scored comfortably against the Belgian goalkeeper (Liverpool 0 - 2 Dortmund, 5' Aubameyang). This meant that Liverpool had to score three goals to qualify for

the semifinal and from a team who conceded twice in first ten minutes against an extremely inform German club. This seemed highly unlikely. Liverpool started playing much more offensively with Origi getting close to scoring twice in the next ten minutes. Liverpool's offensive gameplay meant that Dortmund got more counter attacking chances, coming very close to capitalizing on them in the next 20 minutes. With Adam Lallana missing the clearest chance of the game, the first half ended with a two goal lead for Dortmund. The Red's came out of the halftime break highly motivated and two minutes after the kickoff Divorick Origi scored a simple goal by outpacing Borussia defenders (Liverpool 1 - 2 Dortmund, 48' Origi). Liverpool's hopes were crushed again 10 minutes later by Marco Reus scoring yet another "Reussian" goal (Liverpool 1 - 3 Dortmund, 57' Reus). Liverpool now had to score three goals in 30 minutes and with the way things were going, this seemed very unlikely. The Liverpool Manager, Jurgen Klopp must have also realized this, and to change the flow of the game, he brought in Joe Allen for Adam Lallana and Daniel Sturridge for Roberto Firmino. This change pushed Milner to the wing, where he plays the best. The fruits of this change started to bear three minutes

later. After a swift one-two right outside the box with Milner, the Brazilian talent Coutinho scored a brilliant goal, giving Liverpool fans hope again (Liverpool 2 - 3 Dortmund, 66' Coutinho). After this, Liverpool started pushing their players forward towards a goal, which seemed extremely hard with Dortmund dismissing their attempts with ease. Liverpool took several corners which were all blocked in the front post and this made several fans very angry at the corner-taker, James Milner. This front post corner tactic eventually worked out with Liverpool defender Sakho heading it in in the 77th minute (Liverpool 3 - 3 Dortmund, 77' Sakho). This was the ultimate redemption for Sakho, who was at fault for the first two goals. The next 13 minutes were one of the tensest ever in Anfield history. Liverpool started to push all of their players forward. One goal meant that they would qualify for the semi-final and they had nothing to lose. The moment all Liverpool fans were waiting for came in the 91st minute. James Milner crossed it in for the Croatian defender Dejan Lovren, who headed it in for the corner of the goal, impossible for the German goalkeeper to save. This was what Liverpool fans missed in the past ten years, and was a brilliant game that will not be forgotten for a long time.