



# The Corps Roots the Loudest: A History of Vmi Athletics

*Thomas W. Davis*

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The Keydets played every sport independently until 1918, when they joined the short-lived South Atlantic Intercollegiate Athletic Association in 1918 for all sports. With the demise of the conference in 1921, VMI stayed an independent until joining the Southern Conference (SoCon) in 1924, and a massive one at the time. The next change to be made would not come until 1982, when VMI dropped swimming and diving.[4] The following year, VMI formed a lacrosse program that would play in the United States Intercollegiate Lacrosse Association.[5] VMI's next changes came in the 1990s, reinstating men's swimming and diving in the Southern States Conference in 1990[4] and also joining the Mid-Atlantic Rifle Conference (MAC). MAC records are incomplete; the earliest record of VMI participation in that conference is in the 1991 championships (during the 1990-91 school year), when the Keydets only competed in air rifle. The first records of VMI participation in MAC smallbore competition date to 1995 (1994-95 school year).[6] While VMI would later move its swimming and diving program to two other leagues, it has never moved its rifle program. In 2003, after 79 years in the SoCon, VMI departed for a then fledgling Big South Conference in all sports but lacrosse, rifle, swimming and diving, and wrestling. Wrestling stayed in the SoCon and rifle in the MAC, while the lacrosse program moved to the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC). Men's swimming and diving moved to the Northeast Conference (NEC); when women's swimming and diving was added in 2005, that program also joined the NEC.[4] Both swimming and diving teams left the NEC in 2007 to become charter members of the Coastal Collegiate Swimming Association (CCSA), where both teams remain to this day.[4] When water polo became the newest sport at the Institute in 2009, they accepted their invitation also to the MAAC in 2011.

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