The 2000 Middlebury Panthers were a squad that was looking to avenge a 13-6 loss against Salisbury in the 1999 Division III National Championship. They were a young team, led by lefty attack man Holt Hopkins ’01, who scored 55 goals and 12 assists over the course of the season. Rounding out the attack were David Seeley ’02 and Zach Herbert ’02. Matt Dunn ‘02 and Greg Carroll ‘02, the 4th and 5th highest scoring players on the team, highlighted the midfield. This young offense was complemented well by experience and leadership on defense. Captain Dave Campbell ’00 was the heart of the team, saving 57.9% of shots taken against him. Standout defensemen Ben Fritz ’00 and Jed Raymond ’00 helped hold opposing teams to a 7.6 goals against average.

The team lost only one game all season, their second game, 10-6 against the Gettysburg Bullets. After struggling to find their footing in this early contest, the Panthers beat no team by less than 5 goals for the rest of the season.

The NCAA tournament brought the best competition that Middlebury had seen yet through their season. After easily beating New England College 24-5, the team moved their focus to RIT, whom they easily beat. The semifinals brought the best competition Middlebury had seen, the #1 ranked Nazareth Golden Flyers. However, the high-powered Middlebury offense was primed for another big game; Holt Hopkins and Matt Dunn put in 5 goals each on their way to a 13-8 win. This brought the Panthers to the NCAA finals for the second year in a row.

In a rematch of the championship game from the year before, Middlebury again took on Salisbury for the Division III National Championship. After being down 5-3 after the first quarter, Middlebury took advantage of two quick scores to take an 11-9 lead at halftime. This high scoring game reflected the caliber of offensive players on both teams, and the closeness of the contest could be attributed to hard nosed, disciplined defensive play by both sides. The game continued in this fashion in the second half, although Salisbury would never be able to catch Middlebury because of great goalie play from Dave Campbell ’00, and impressive defense from Jed Raymond ’00. Middlebury would win it 16-12.

After avenging their loss in the championship game in 1999, the team set their eyes towards the next season. They had a young offense that was littered with talent and a defense that promised to rebuild well after the loss of Campbell, Raymond, and Fritz. This team established the Middlebury lacrosse dynasty and earned respect for New England lacrosse amongst the Division III world.

In 2001, the Middlebury Panthers came in with high hopes for another great season and a third straight NCAA Division III National Championship appearance.

The defense and goaltending were big questions during the off season and Sebastian Astrada ’02, the only returning defensive starter, would need to develop as a defensive leader for the team to be successful.

The team had another fantastic season, finishing 17-1. Their only loss came in an atypical 23-10 loss to Springfield College. As expected, the young and tested offense performed well, with David Seeley ’02 and Holt Hopkins ’01 scoring the most points. Freshman Eric Krieger ’04 stepped up in goal and saved 58% percent of shots against.

The team played in the inaugural NESCAC lacrosse championship game, playing and beating Bowdoin 11-5. Five goals from Matt Dunn helped secure the victory for the Panthers.   
 This team would face an inexperienced Gettysburg Bullets team in the NCAA finals after beating Ithaca and Nazareth to get there. Eric Krieger had a huge day in goal with 14 saves, and the offense proved to be too much for the Gettysburg defense; five players had 2 or more points, capped by Holt Hopkins’ 2 goals and 4 assists. The team proved that they were once again the best team in Division III. The team would also return many of its starters, leaving the team with high hopes for a third straight national championship the following year.

2002 brought the third straight national championship to Middlebury and their second straight NESCAC championship. The team posted a one-loss season 18-1 for the third year in a row, this year losing only to highly ranked Bowdoin College 9-8. Seniors Zach Herbert, Matt Dunn, and David Seeley would all turn in excellent final seasons, and Eric Krieger and Sebastian Astrada led the defense that let up half as many goals over the course of the season as their team scored.

The team made short work of the NESCAC tournament, beating Amherst 16-5 in the semi-finals and Colby 14-8 in the finals. After easily winning the NESCAC title, the team set their sights for the national tournament. The team narrowly beat Whittier 13-12, and handled Ithaca 12-6 in the semi final. The team would play Gettysburg again in the finals, and after a hard fought game, won 14-9. The game was tight; the score was tied at 7-7 at the end of the 3rd quarter. However, Middlebury pulled away with 7 goals in the fourth quarter to seal the game for the Panthers.

Between 2000-2002 many great players contributed to Middlebury’s lacrosse success. However, the run would not end there. The team would appear in 6 out of 7 national championship games between 1999-2005, winning three. The team would also win the first seven consecutive NESCAC lacrosse championships as well. This consistency is a testament to great coaching, great team chemistry, and dedication to the program from the coaches to the fans. Middlebury sports have always had a tradition of excellence and the lacrosse team has exemplified that tradition.