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Player Profile

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Despite a national championship under her belt, Messiah College Women's Soccer player Macaulay Soto knows that the road to receiving such is no easy feat. FULL STORY ->

THE HEART OF A CHAMPION

By: Elizabeth Gallo

(Grantham, PA)—On the morning of December 1, 2012, Messiah College Women's Soccer Coach Scott Frey told his team that it was not about whether they won or lost that day. Rather, it was about the journey getting to that moment, the relationships his players made along the way, and how each one of them had changed as people.

Coach Frey and his team beat Emory University 1-0 that day to put a fifth NCAA Division III Soccer Championship under their belts. Those heartfelt pregame words seemed to resonate with most of Coach Frey's players, but for freshman midfielder Macaulay Soto, those words could not have been more appropriate.

Born to run

Born a coach's daughter, Soto was expected to play ball. From the early age of four, her parents, Mariann and Wesley Soto, knew that they had a future star on their hands.

Mariann mentioned, "After much success in her younger years playing soccer, my husband and I were approached by the director of the soccer program that Macaulay was excelling in, inviting her to play on the boys' travel soccer team. At the time, there was not a team for girls her age with that much skill."

Needless to say the Soto family accepted the invitation. Throughout the years, Soto not only continued to excel in soccer, but in basketball as well.

Mariann said, "Macaulay was also a natural at playing point guard. As a coach's kid, she had a very high IQ for the game."

A standout

As Soto progressed in her athletic career, it seemed as if she could only get better. In addition to starting as point guard all four years of her varsity basketball career at Warwick High School in Lititz, Pennsylvania, Soto also made the Lancaster-Lebanon League All Star team all four years of her varsity soccer career.

While Soto loved competition and loved winning, she also noted she loved her teammates.

Mariann said, "Macaulay was born a competitive athlete with a heart of gold for her teammates."

Throughout Soto's entire life as an athlete, she was known by many as the "unselfish one."

Mariann said, "Macaulay was always unselfish in her baskets made or her goals scored. Not a single one of those accomplishments has ever clouded her vision of being a team player. She has always passed to that one player who had never scored or to that player who felt the need to score on a given day."

That mindset has been a large part of Soto's motivation and success as an athlete, and that same mindset is what brought her to the next level.

Short, but sweet

Standing at a little over five feet tall, Soto is currently a sophomore midfielder for the Messiah College Women's Soccer team. As a freshman, Soto played in 22 season games with three goals and four assists. Just a year later, she started in all 24 season games with five goals and seven assists. Soto was even named NSCAA's 3rd Team All-Region and Honorable Mention All-Commonwealth. However, it was not an easy journey.

Scott Frey, currently the winningest active coach with ten or more years of coaching in all of NCAA Division III soccer, noted that Soto is one of his favorite stories.

Frey said, "Macaulay came to Messiah with a hard start in terms of life. When she got here, we had a conversation to take care of life. If we took care of life, we both knew that soccer would take care of itself."

As a proclaimed popular student in high school, Soto admitted that she did not surround herself with the best crowd.

Soto said, "I thought my high school friends were the greatest people in the world. When I told them I was going to Messiah, they gave me a hard time. Only two of my friends, Dylan and Landon, supported my decision. Truthfully, I came to Messiah strictly for soccer. I wanted to go to Messiah for a semester, win a national championship, and then leave."

However, despite winning a national championship, Soto tragically lost Dylan and Landon, two of her biggest supporters, within that same year.

The right fit

Due to the shocking tragedies, Soto did not fully adjust to Messiah until about six weeks into her college career and throughout that time, Coach Frey was a tremendous help. Now, approximately 52 weeks in, Soto is confident that Messiah is the where she is meant to be.

Coach Frey joked, "If Macaulay was not at Messiah, she would probably be in trouble somewhere!"

Soto expressed her appreciation for Coach Frey, “Coach never gave up on me. He made it clear to me that it is *not* all about soccer.”

Yet, Soto and Coach Frey were not the only ones who were certain Messiah is where Macaulay is meant to be.

Ashley Locke, a junior defender from Cincinnati, Ohio, met Soto as a sophomore. As the soccer season progressed, Soto and Locke became good friends. Locke continually talked Soto through her struggles, especially when she was having a difficult time coping with the loss of Dylan and Landon. But as time went on, Locke noticed a sudden change.

“Macaulay started to gain more confidence in what she believed in, not just in the Lord, but in herself, and who she was as a person. She started to form a vision for who she wanted to become.”

With the support from her parents, Coach Frey, and her teammates, Soto is fully confident in who she is not only as a person, but as a college soccer player, too.

Soto said, “The team made it a lot easier for me. This year is a lot different for me because I know my role and I am confident in that knowledge.”

Coach Frey excitedly mentioned, “Macaulay is an impactful player without question. She is dynamic, she wins balls in the air, and she is a tackler. Her energy, work rate, passion, and love for the game is beyond fun to watch.”

A silver lining

Losing two of her most supportive friends certainly took a toll on Soto. However, those two losses have brought her closer to God and have made her an even better person, on and off the field.

Locke mentioned, “I know there are still times when she struggles with the loss of her friends, but has found a way to be joyful despite her circumstances. She has really started to become a servant. Not only does she put other’s needs before her own, but she cares about the success of her team as a whole.”

While Soto and her teammates did win the National Championship later that day, the journey, the relationships, and the change in themselves was what made that title more than worth it.

Mariann said, “Being a part of a team like Messiah Women’s Soccer has been the absolute best thing for Macaulay. Being a part of a team with teammates who have the same goals, the same unselfish attitudes, and those who are her true friends.”