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# MaKayla Waldner Signs to Play Soccer at Mississippi State

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**Dexter, Missouri** - On Wednesday, February 3, 2016, MaKayla Waldner of Dexter, Missouri signed to play soccer at Mississippi State University. For her it was a dream come true to play the sport she loves so much at the collegiate level.


It's an extraordinary accomplishment to play a sport at the college level, but for MaKayla Waldner it's been an even greater challenge playing a sport not offered at her local high school. For years MaKayla has played soccer. She first began at the age of about 6 years old when she traveled from Dexter to Sikeston to play soccer with her friend, Julia Hahn and Julia's dad Brad Hahn who just happened to enjoy coaching youth soccer.

"When I was little, Julia and I used to be super close and her dad said 'let's just go out and play soccer'. And I ended up falling in love with the game," commented Waldner. "We started playing in Sikeston when I was in the first grade. It just took off from Sikeston to Cape to St. Louis and I finally found my place."

When asked about her memories as a youngster, MaKayla said, "Whenever we were younger we used to play this game called "Egg". You would stand on the baseline and kick the ball and there would always be one less ball. One time it was me and Julia left and I ended up tackling her for the ball and she ended up losing and me winning."

This young athlete has it all together! She's intelligent, beautiful, athletic beyond words, and talented in the arts as well. She had three pieces accepted at the Southeast Missouri

State University's 37th Annual High School Art Exhibition and received a scholarship for the Summer Art Academy as an outstanding junior last year. She was named 2015 Football Homecoming Queen her junior year at Dexter High School.

MaKayla has always been a multi-sport athlete. She  excels in every sport she has played at Dexter High School. Her sophomore year she was the first female football player for the Bearcats and did quite well as the kicker. She has also played girls basketball, tennis, and is quite the Track and Field competitor as well.


Being a multi-sport athlete can be difficult for students who also excel in the academics. She is a Top 10% student and a DHS Honors Society member at Dexter High School.

"It has been hard on school and missing so much school traveling, but I am really excited to start the next chapter," commented Waldner.

When asked how did she decide on Mississippi State as her 'next chapter', she said, "My sophomore year I started looking at colleges. And with me not having soccer at my high school I had to go on websites and write recruiting profiles. I was in Memphis for a game and they came and watched me play. When I visited the campus I knew it felt good."


Upon graduation in May 2016 at Dexter High School, MaKayla will pursue a degree in Biomechanic Engineering and wants to design prosthetics while she plays soccer at Mississippi State. "I am blessed to be able to do what I do and for people who aren't like that I want to be able to help them," Waldner said of her future career.

What else does this young athlete want to accomplish? "It would be super cool to be on t.v.," she said with a huge smile. "National Scouts have talked to my coaches about me and who knows the Olympics would be a great accomplishment."

 Two of her coaches were able to attend the signing on Wednesday. Brad Hahn who was instrumental in getting MaKayla interested in soccer was able to say a few words about her and Kevin Ellis who has been her Track Coach since she was five year old also had a few comments. "I started coaching her in first grade," Hahn said. "Her and my daughter, Julia, played together in DPR soccer and then I coached her traveling team. MaKayla is a respectful athlete. When I first had her she didn't know a thing about soccer. I continued to talk to her and convince her. She doesn't need to be confined to a gym, soccer is her sport."

"Starting at that age and she really enjoyed it. She had fun at that age," continued Hahn. "Later on you separate those kids from park and rec from the elite athletes. She was an

elite. I think you will see her on t.v. in the future. From 3rd grade to 8th grade i coached her in the Sikeston All-Star Soccer group. We had to travel to Memphis and St. Louis because then there were many local teams. Now she travels all over."

"We have to go back to 2003 when I first got to  know MaKayla and her family," commented

Kevin Ellis. "I was coaching a bunch of kids out of Poplar Bluff in track and field. My daughter was one year older than MaKayla, she had long black curly hair. I didn't know it at the time, but the two kids were talking to their parents about the curly haired kid from Dexter competing against the curly haired girl from Poplar Bluff. I didn't know it at the time they were talking about each other. A couple years later I began coaching her and it's been a remarkable ride since about '04. Watching her mature from a kid to a young lady has just been remarkable."

What stands out about her abilities? "Her work ethic," stated Ellis. "I have never had to make her work hard. She wants to be the best she can be. Her work ethic probably sets her apart from most kids I have coached. Some kids you have to stand over them to watch everything they do. I was able to give her the workouts. I never had to make her work hard. She has always been athletic and very respectful. Most of all she is coachable."



**Below is just a portion of MaKayla Waldner's career at Dexter High School:**

Tennis: 4 years varsity

Qualified for State her Sophomore year

MVP Sophomore and Junior years

Basketball: 1 year varsity (sophomore)

4th place state finish (freshman)

2nd place state finish (sophomore)

Football - 1 year varsity (sophomore)

SEMO All-Conference Honorable Mention Kicker

Track - 4 years varsity

Freshman - 8th place in State 300m hurdles, 3rd place State 100m hurdles

Sophomore - 2nd place in State 300m hurdles, 7th place in State 100m hurdles

Junior - State Champion 300m hurdles, 2nd place in State 100m hurdles, 2nd place in State 200m dash, 5th place in State Long Jump

</images/2016 Images/Mak Track.jpg>

AAU Track - 15 time National Medalist, 2 time National Champion, Record holder in multi-evens 10 year old division.

MaKayla holds the record in the 4x100 and 4x200 meter relays at T.S. Hill Middle School. She holds the record for the Triple Jump at T.S. Hill Middle School. She received the 2015 Top Female Athlete Award for Track at Dexter High School. She holds four Dexter High School records.

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She also competed at the North American Cup National Soccer Championship in Seattle,

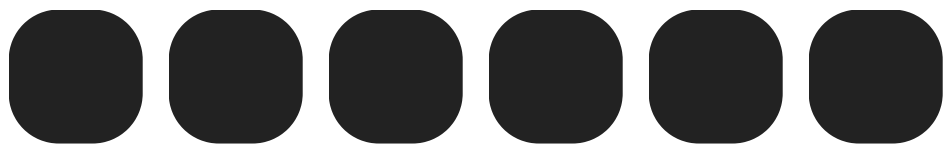
Washington in 2015 with Coach Jeff Besserman of the St. Louis Scott Gallagher Soccer team.

For this young athlete the world is her oyster! No matter where MaKayla Waldner goes she will succeed. She is probably one of the most talented athletes to graduate from Dexter High School and we look forward to her continued success not only on the soccer field, but in the classroom. Congratulations MaKayla we hope to see you on t.v. as well!

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