

Going the Distance

Sophomore Switches from Soccer to Track

Kaylee **Asche**

Pulse pounding, beads of sweat trickling down her glistening forehead, trying to catch some air as she rounds the corner. This is the final stretch. There are only 50 more feet to go until she crosses the inviting white line that seals her fate. She is ahead, but her opponents are quickly approaching.

She collapses after she crosses the finish line. She is exhausted, but it's a good feeling. After this rough day of track practice, all she wants to do is go home, take a cool shower and rest her feet. A new day of four 100-meter dashes awaits.

After her pulse settles down and she is able to catch her breath, all she can think about is how far she has come this year. She has finally found her niche.

For sophomore Nyoke Dumba, running has always been a passion. "I love running.

If it's a nice day, you will find me outside running. I put in my earphones, crank up the music and then I'm gone. I feel like I'm flying," Dumba said.

In seventh grade, she ran track for Buffett Middle School. However, she stopped running track after that season ended, instead choosing a different route.

Dumba started playing soccer in eighth grade and continued into her freshman year of high school. Soccer runs in her family and in her blood. Both her older and younger brothers play soccer. "My older brother goes to Mount Michael and plays on their soccer team. My younger brother plays for the Omaha Football Club (OFC)."

Dumba soon became restless and felt like she wanted something more. "Soccer was just about running back and forth on a field. I felt

like I needed something different. I wanted more of a challenge. I had tried out for soccer this year and had made the junior varsity team, but I thought I would benefit the most from running track. Also, with soccer, you only really get to know the people on your team. But with track, you get to meet new people," Dumba said. She was also influenced to join the team because of her friends and family. "My friends said I

would do really well. Two of my best friends, Payton Horacek and Nicole Liske, are on the track team. It's fun to be able to joke around and have a good time with them. But when it's time to run, we know when to get serious and push each other to do our best," Dumba said.

Within her family, Dumba's mom has been her biggest supporter. "My mom has been telling me ever since eighth grade that I should've stuck with track. She is supportive in all my decisions, but she thinks track is the best decision for me. I still play club soccer in the fall, but track is my main focus right now," Dumba said. "It challenges me in all different aspects: physically, mentally and emotionally. It is also 10 times more fun."

There is only one thing she doesn't like about track. "I don't like stretching, even though I probably should. I don't know why, but I just can't do it," Dumba laughed.

The coaches welcomed her with open arms, even though she started later than the rest of the team.

"When Mr. Golka and Mr. Wright found out that I was joining the team, they both came up to me, shook my hand and said, 'Welcome to the team.'"

"She has a lot of potential in many different areas," track and cross country coach Mr. Roger Wright said. "She tried out for cross country freshman year and did really well. Overall, I believe she will do a great job. She is a good athlete and a hard worker."

Even before she started track, Dumba already had a strategy in mind.

"Before every soccer game, I used to put on my sweatshirt, sweatpants and headphones and walk around by myself listening to hip-hop. I will do the same before every track meet because it gets me in the zone. I concentrate on the music, and it helps pump me up." Her favorite event is the 400 or 800-meter

dash, but she's always up for trying something new.

"I've been thinking about trying hurdles. But I hope to go to State. So, no matter how

"Find out what really makes you happy and pour all your mind, heart and soul into it. Practice really does make perfect."

-Nyoke Dumba, sophomore

I get there, whether it be the 400-meter dash or hurdles, it doesn't matter," Dumba said.

Her first official meet was March 24 at Papillion-LaVista High School, and she participated in the 800-meter dash and the 4x800-meter

relay. Her 4x800-meter relay team placed first, and she placed seventh in the 800-meter dash.

Dumba's favorite type of practices are the hard ones, the ones that really challenge her to see what she can do.

"At the beginning of each practice, I feel relaxed and calm. But, by the end, I am heaving, trying to catch my breath. When practice is over, I feel like I have accomplished something."

Dumba has a few words of wisdom for beginning athletes:

"Find out what really makes you happy and pour all your mind, heart and soul into it. Practice really does make perfect. If you practice on your own, you'll be ready to compete."

While she is doing practice relays, she only has one goal on her mind.

"The only thing I think about when I run is passing that next person. I am a very competitive person, and I like it when people run close by. It really pushes me. Once I put my mind to it, nothing can really stop me. If someone is ahead of me, all I can think about is passing her."

Once she passes that person, she moves on to the next person. It is a continuous cycle.

But no matter how Dumba finishes, just knowing she did her best is all that she needs.



On your mark, get set, go! Dumba gets ready to race against her fellow teammates at a practice after school. Photo by AbbeyFurlow

Transfer student **sidelined** by NSAA rules

Erin **O'Brien**

As Marian's soccer team pursues a second straight State Championship title this season, one of its newest members will have to watch from the bench, a place she rarely finds herself. Sophomore Taylor Saucier transferred to Marian in January with hopes of playing goalie for one of the best teams in the state. However, she was about to face a major setback.

"I am not allowed to play varsity this season due to the NSAA rule that a student who transfers schools may not participate in varsity athletics until 90 school days have passed. Ninety school days for me will be after school ends this year," Saucier said. "I didn't know about the rule until this happened, so it made me really mad. It's like they're telling me I can't do something that I love."

Saucier transferred from Burke High School earlier this year for both personal and safety reasons. "There were days that I would walk through the halls and just hope that I was not near any fights or a student who had a knife or gun. Plenty of my friends are there, and I know that some students do have those in their backpacks. That made me scared," Saucier said.

The final straw came for Saucier and her family in October when traces of mercury were found in a school water fountain. "At least ten students and two teachers were sent

to the hospital that day. That was the final point where I knew I had to leave the school and find a place where I felt safe and out of danger," Saucier said.

In addition, Saucier was also having issues with her school soccer team. During her freshman year, Saucier had the opportunity to play in Holland with her regional team, preventing her from trying out for the Burke squad. This prompted many of the Burke players to ostracize her.

"Half of the team said 'No, you're not welcome.' So I thought, 'Okay, I'll go play with a team that wants me,'" Saucier said.

Saucier said that she feels much more welcome as part of both the Marian soccer team and the Marian community. "The girls on the team are great, and I have known most of them for quite a while, since people in the soccer community know each other. Everyone has been so great to me, and I feel like a part of the team," Saucier said. "With Marian itself, I love it! It's a great school because everyone gets along so well; it kind of reminds me of a sorority."

"She fits right in and really blends in well," junior teammate Jackie Tondl said. "It's tough [that she can't play] because she's a really good player."

Although Saucier cannot play for Marian this year, she is still a member of the varsity squad as the team manager, and she keeps herself in shape.

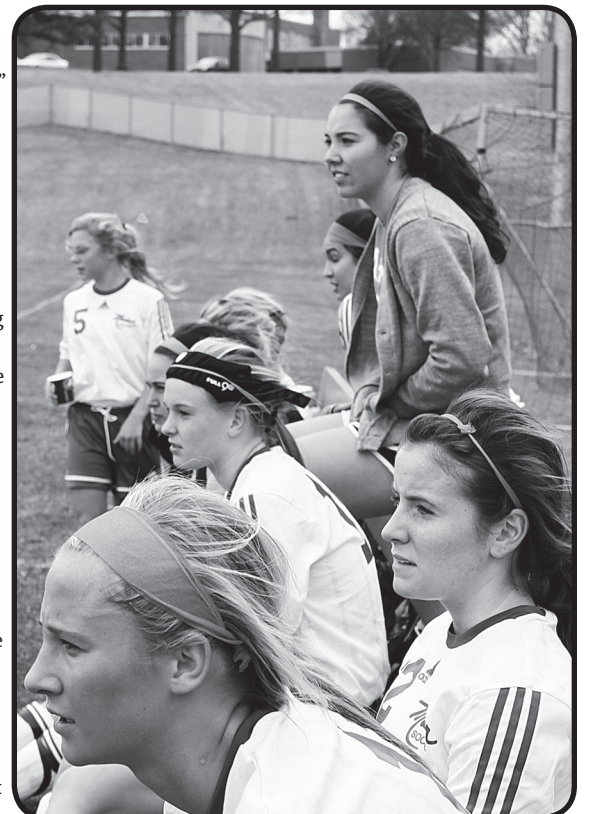
"I work out twice a week, and I also have two goalie trainings a week," Saucier said. "I'm also going to do a couple tournaments with a team from Chicago." Saucier plays for the nationally-renowned club team, Toro Bravo, with Tondl and three other Marian juniors: Ava Ambrose, Erin Stewart and Emily Nulty.

Although the thought of not being able to play for her high school team still stings, Saucier has a bright future ahead of her. In addition to trying out for the Marian team next year, she also plans to play soccer for Texas A&M University after graduation.

"I verbally committed this past December but will not be able to officially sign my commitment until I am a senior, but I am very excited!" Saucier said. "It is so great to have the opportunity to play college soccer, and it has been a dream of mine since forever ago."

Despite all the misfortunes that have come Saucier's way over the past year, she still remains grateful and optimistic.

"My dream is finally becoming a reality, and I couldn't have done it without all the support of my family, friends, coach and teammates," Saucier said.



Number One Fan. Sophomore Taylor Saucier sits on top of the bench as she watches the first Marian home soccer game from the sidelines. Marian beat Bellevue East, 5-0. Photo by AnnieMcClure