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Hunter West oral history interview by Danielle Riley, January 16, 2004

Hunter West (Interviewee)

Danielle E. Riley (Interviewer)

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Narrator: Hunter West
Current Position: Captain of the Men's
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Childhood

Mr. West grew up in Bradenton, Florida, where he has lived his entire life. His father had always been involved in athletics, thus he and his brothers were raised around sports and outdoor activities. He remembers starting to play soccer with his older brother, Taylor, at the age of only seven years.

Early involvement in soccer

In his first soccer game as a youth, Mr. West scored fourteen goals, "So I thought that was the right sport for me." He continued played soccer through high school at the varsity level, and was recruited to come play at USF. As a high school player, he won the distinctions of All-State, All-Region, and All-American his junior and senior years.

Recruitment

He visited USF in the summer of 2001, and recalls making a good impression on the coaches and players. As a result, the coaches followed his progress through his senior year and welcomed him onto the team after graduation. Though he had a couple of other options, he chose USF because, "I liked the [head] coach and also ... the assistant coaches, so that's why I made the decision so early ... I fit in pretty well." He also had a number of friends who planned on attending South Florida and playing on the team. Additionally, he could remain close enough to home to see his family regularly.

First impressions of USF

His first impression of USF was a positive one; he remembers most being impressed just by the size of the university. "I loved the coaching staff, I loved the players, [and] I loved the university." The head coach of the soccer team offered Mr. West a scholarship, and he gladly accepted it. "I just thought this school was right for me."

Academics

Academically, Mr. West has decided to pursue a degree in business, and he finds it challenging to balance the demands of sports and academics. Although the schedule is

particularly difficult, he is able to rely upon advisors and tutors to catch him up on missed time.

Living arrangements

As a result of a team rule, Mr. West lived in a dormitory on campus as a freshman, though he has since moved into an apartment off-campus. He remembers his time in the dorms favorably, particularly since he was able to live along with three of his teammates. "It was kind of loud at times ... I love the experience of it. There are some memories there that I will never forget." He remembers one occasion where a food fight broke out among him and his co-residents at the dorm, the effects of which they spent a good portion of the night cleaning up. "The next day we were pretty tired before practice." Mr. West is currently living off campus with a teammate that he had played high school soccer with.

The coach stays very involved in the academic progress of his athletes, so that they are able to participate on the team.

Typical day

A typical day for Mr. West includes waking up at 6:15 am in order to be on the track by 7:00 am. After some exercising, the team practices for about two hours until classes begin around 10:00 or 11:00. The team meets again from 4:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon to lift weights. "From there, hopefully we go home and get some rest and start studying." Usually, the games are on the weekends; if they are out of town, the team is usually required to leave a day in advance.

Athletic performance

He came onto the team as a freshman hoping to get a starting position. "I worked very hard and I earned a starting spot as a freshman on the men's soccer team." His first year, Mr. West led the team in both goals and points, and made both first teams All-Conference and All-American. "As a captain you need good leadership, and I think that's one of the things [the] coach spotted in me. A lot of the guys tend to look up to me and listen to me, so I think that's why ... he picked me as one of the captains this year ... it means a lot."

Future plans

"Right now I'm just planning on getting an education. That's my main goal. If soccer takes me to the professional level, then I'm sure I'll try to play. But if not ... there are some memories I'll never forget here. Right now I'm just concentrating on my education."

Experience at USF

Mr. West speaks highly of his experiences thus far at the university, and believes strongly in the quality of education and accessibility of his professors. "I think that's one of the reasons I like USF so much ... the professors like to interact with their students and help them the best way they can."

If soccer doesn't work out, he would like to stay around the sport, possibly as a coach somewhere. "I love teaching kids, and I would love to do that."

One of the main things he has learned from his coach is discipline. "It's always needed on the field and it's always needed in the classroom."

Team spirit

The team members try to spend time together both on and off the field, developing a more familial type of spirit in addition to their participation in athletics. Because soccer and academics command the majority of his time, Mr. West is not really involved in too many other campus activities.

Because soccer is not as big a sport in the U.S. as it is in other countries around the world, attendance at their games is, "not always what we expect."

Team record

His freshman season, the team was 11-7 and they made it to the conference tournament. This year they were working with younger players, and finished with an overall record of 9-10. "Some of the goals that we set in the beginning of the year weren't met, and that's why we're putting in the hard work here this spring."

End of Interview