

# Insight into Injury: An athlete's perspective

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US Women's National Soccer Team 2008 -2015

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## Introduction

- US National Soccer Team from 2008 – 2015
  - Represented the USA in 113 games during career
- Two time Olympic Gold Medalist
  - Beijing 2008, London 2012
- World Cup Silver Medalist
  - Germany 2011
- Retired from soccer in 2015 and began medical school at UCSD



# Outline

- 1) Youth soccer career
  - ACL Injuries
  - Early lessons learned
- 2) College and professional career
  - Free of major injuries
  - Prevention and maintenance
- 3) Late soccer career
  - Series of injuries
  - Insight into athlete's mindset



# Youth Soccer Career

- ACL injuries
- Early lessons learned



## Falling in love with the game



## Becoming more competitive

- Club Soccer – San Diego Surf
- USA Youth National Teams



## Left ACL Tear

- 2002 Youth World Cup in Canada
- Final game of tournament
- Age 16



## Right ACL Tear

- March 2003, age 17
- 6 months after surgery on left ACL
- First practice returning to club team



## Lessons Learned

- Break things down into smaller attainable goals and celebrate the small victories along the way
- Helped me realize the importance of balance
  - Value other things outside of athletics
  - Family, friends, academics



## College and Professional Career

- Free of major injuries
- Prevention and maintenance



## Stanford

- Balance of school, soccer, friendship



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## National Team Opportunity

- Soon after graduating from Stanford I had an opportunity with the National Team
- Pia Sundhage was the new coach
- Brought into a camp in Jan 2008
- Opportunity to make the Olympic Team
- Ended up making the Olympic Roster and winning a gold medal

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## 2008 Olympics, Beijing



## 2011 World Cup, Germany



## 2012 Olympics, London



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## Why did I make the National Team?

- Unique qualities on the field
  - Tackling ability
  - Aggressive style of play



- Attitude
  - Dedicated, work ethic
  - Positive and coachable
  - Team oriented

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## Why did I stay on the national team?

### Staying uninjured was key

- Available
- Reliable, consistent
- Able to put in the extra hours to constantly improve my game



## Maintaining My Health



## Later Career

- Series of injuries
- Insight into the athlete mindset



## Syndesmotic “High” ankle sprain

- Early April 2014
- National Team game against China in San Diego
- I was tackled from behind and twisted my left ankle
- Non weight bearing for three weeks, out for about 2 months



## Series of Injuries

- Back playing in about 2 months, but I wasn't really healthy yet
- Left os trigone displaced and irritated, pain with plantar flexion
- Right achilles synovitis
- Pulled right gastrocnemius – out again for another two months
- Lingering right achilles pain
- Left hamstring strain



## Athlete Mindset

- 1) Timing and pressure leads to poor decision-making
  - Trying to make the roster for the 2015 World Cup
    - Fear of losing my spot
  - Beginning of professional season
    - Responsibility to team, pressure from coach
- 2) The athlete is often not an accurate reporter
  - Used to playing through pain
  - Uncomfortable resting
- 3) Less serious injuries can be difficult to understand



## Ways to Help

- Be aware of each athlete's unique situation
- Be cognizant of timelines
- Strive for frequent, open, and honest communication amongst all involved with the rehabilitation of the athlete



## Thank You!

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