

Senior Caty Arnold Recovers from ACL Injury



Photographer Riley Kampff

Senior Caty Arnold prepares for a throw-in on 3/30 vs. Troy Buchanan.

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The Lady Knights varsity soccer team was having a regular practice last April when a sudden incident left the entire team in shock. Caty Arnold, a junior on the varsity team at the time, went to make a turn during a drill when she felt a bolt of pain in her leg and fell to the ground. Arnold later found out that she had suffered a torn ACL, an injury that caught everyone from the coaches to the players off guard.

“[The injury] was bizarre because we didn’t quite know what happened,” head coach Mark Olwig said. “We were just doing a drill, and it’s the way she turned to go to the next spot. She kind of just fell over, and we weren’t sure what happened. We were all in shock with the severity of it because it was a non-contact injury.”

Prior to this, the worst injuries that Arnold had to deal with were minor ankle sprains and tweaks, neither of which held her out of a game or for an extended period of time. When she found out from then FHN trainer Joe Bommarito that she had torn her ACL, however, Arnold knew that this was going to be a much different experience.

“When Joe told me that I had torn my ACL, I knew that it was going to be bad and require surgery and that it was going to be a pretty long recovery, but I still don’t think I was quite as prepared for just how long it was,” Arnold said.

It ended up taking nine months for Arnold to get healthy and return to the soccer field. To get to this stage, she first had to have surgery on the injured knee. She then

underwent a step-by-step recovery process that started with mainly stretching drills and progressed to more demanding exercises as she became closer and closer to 100 percent. During this process, Olwig made it clear to Arnold that no matter what happened, she was still a member of the team.

“One of the things I wanted to stress to her was that she was still a part of the Lady Knights soccer program,” Olwig said. “An injury does not remove you from anything. Soccer is important to us, but the individual is more important and we wanted to make sure she was still a part of the team.”

The thing that helped Arnold the most in getting through her injury was being able to remain with her team while the season went on. No matter where the team went, she was given the opportunity to go and stay with her teammates. While it helped, it also provided some of the more challenging moments of this entire experience for Arnold, mostly when it came to only being able to watch as others played.

“It was kind of hard initially watching my teammates practice and things like that because you want to be out there playing and doing stuff but you just can’t,” Arnold said. “Once I had started to get back into it, though, I was very eager to jump ahead, and my club coaches kind of had to hold me back so I didn’t mess anything up again.”

While most athletes will always want to get right back on the field, it is crucial to have people like their coaches there for them to keep them in line, stand by their side and support them while they go through an injury of as much magnitude as a torn ACL. This applies to Arnold and her situation, as everyone from coaches of both her club and high school teams to former and current teammates aided her along the way back to the field. One of the people who played the biggest role as a supporter in Arnold’s recovery was senior Elizabeth Conley. Conley played with her on the FHN soccer team in each of her first three years at the high school level, while also going through the exact same type of injury as Arnold in her sophomore year. With experience in recovering from this injury, Conley had a better understanding of what Arnold was going through than most.

“I tried to support her through it because [my old injury] was one of the worst experiences of my life, and I know soccer is really important to her,” Conley said. “It’s really painful to be separated from the sport you love for such a long period of time.”

While she was away from playing the sport for nearly three quarters of a year, Arnold’s relationship with soccer only grew. She discovered what the game truly means to her and that it is one of the most important things to her in her life.

“I’ve definitely come to have a deeper appreciation for the game due to not being able to play it for so long,” Arnold said. “I have found a new love for it, and it motivates me even harder to keep playing and doing what I love.”

Arnold is going into her senior year of playing soccer and will be slotted right into the left back position of the varsity team. With it being her final year playing high school soccer, Arnold has set the bar high for where she wants herself and her team to be at the end of the season.

“I’d like us to win Districts and Sectionals, and then go on to State,” Arnold said. “We’ve been capable the last couple of years and I think this year could be the year where our group connects more and is able to do it.”



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