

EHS Central Defender Abreya Deckard Signs Field Hockey Letter-Of-Intent With Belmont Abbey College

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EDWARDSVILLE - Abreya Deckard, a central defender with the Edwardsville High School field hockey team, signed a letter-of-intent to attend Belmont Abbey College in Belmont, N.C. in a ceremony held Wednesday afternoon at the high school.

Deckard, a three-year varsity starter, will play for the Crusaders and is looking to become a key player on defense for the team.

Deckard originally had other plans for college, but a call from Tigers' head coach Jaimee Phegley helped make Deckard change her mind.

"I was going to go to a community college, and stay with family and all that," Deckard said during an interview following the ceremony, "and then, my coach texted me, and says 'are you still interested in playing?' And I was like, 'sure, if it's not too late.' And then the coach sent to me was coach (Meaghan Smiga), and I had met her from a previous school (Concordia University in Mequon, Wisc.), so she's like 'you have to come play for this team,'" she said with a laugh. "And she's really excited, I was like 'sure, why not?' And North Carolina, my mom wanted to move there, too. So it's been in the back of her mind, after two years of community college. So the fact like she texted me, and the spur of North Carolina, my mom was like 'this is a sign, let's go!'"

The campus was also another attraction to Deckard as well.

"They have a really nice campus," Deckard said, "And it is a private Catholic school, which is nice. And the fact I knew coach Meg, that's why I was like 'OK, you know?' she said again with a laugh. "It was a D-II school. I wanted to play D-II, but hadn't talked to many D-II schools. And so, there were a lot of factors that played into that. I said 'I have to go there.'"

Deckard also considered Concordia, where Smiga was previously the head coach, and Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Mo., and plans to major in pre-dentstry. She does plan on becoming an orthodontist after graduating, helping people wherever she can.

"Yeah, because I want to be an orthodontist," Deckard said. "I know my orthodontist personally, and she has her own building and practice, and it's so nice, and I've been talking to her. I've been really interested. So like, I've been getting into that. It'll be 11 years of school, though, so I don't know how I'm going to do that, but I'm going tot try."

Phegley is very excited for Deckard signing with the Crusaders.

"Congrats to Abreya," Phegley said. "We're really excited that this worked out for her to get it figured out so she could head there this fall."

Phegley thinks that Deckard will bring much to the team, and will be able to contribute immediately.

"Along with her being excited to continue playing, Abreya's always been a really intense player," Phegley said. "She gives what she has at all times, and she's a great defender, but she's also versatile, and can play other positions on the field. So I think they're going to learn that pretty quickly that she's capable of really being wherever they need her to be at, because she gives 100 percent wherever she's at on the field."

Deckard will bring much to the Crusaders the moment she steps onto the field.

"Oh, definitely," Phegley said. "I don't know what their lineup looks like, and as a freshman, you never know what to expect in terms of her playing time, but I have had experience with their head coach. She came and worked with us last summer, and I know she has some pretty big plans for Abreya, so we're excited for that."

Field hockey is a very well-established sport on the east coast and Atlantic coast, and Phegley feels that it'll help Deckard tremendously in her development as a player.

"She's really going to love being in North Carolina, one, because of the weather," Phegley said with a laugh, "so she's excited about that. And just on the east coast, that there's just like a different experience. It's something that's in nearly every high school as opposed to being a random sport. So I think she'll feel that difference in the normalcy of field hockey."

During her time playing with the Tigers, Phegley felt that Deckard brought much intensity and skill as a defender, and thinks that it'll transfer well into college.

"Well, Bre was on varsity since her sophomore year," Phegley said. "She had already built that understanding and experience of the pace that varsity would bring, so by her junior year, she was starting and playing nearly every minute of the game. And so, what I think she'll bring with her from that is endurance, and being able to play entire games with that intensity. And just like her communication skills from playing center defense, which has a lot of responsibility in that position, that she spent two-and-a-half years in that spot. Whether she plays that position in college or not, just the experience she has working with the goalie, and communicating and being a leader on the field is really going to show."

Both Deckard and Phegley also have a common favorite memory on her time with the Tigers, involving a funny incident at a game at Parkway West.

"One time we were at, I believe, it was Parkway West," Phegley said, "and when they were announcing her name, they called her Algebra. And we were cracking up, because I know I did not write down that on the paper. So now, that's her alter ego. So whenever she would get mad on the field, we would ride her. 'C'mon Algebra, you can do it,'" she said with a big smile.

Deckard laughed and smiled in recalling the memory.

"I think this is everyone's favorite from my team" Deckard said. "It was one game, where we did our lineup, and the guy calls me Algebra. And like, it was a really close game, and this girl is shooting her shot, and I can't remember what the goalie was doing, but I blocked it and everything, and everyone's going 'yeah, Algebra!'"

All kidding aside, Deckard is looking forward to the chance to play at Belmont Abbey, and knows what she'll bring to the Crusader lineup this fall. She also recalled a funny incident chatting with her new teammates.

"Well, I hope I become a really more aggressive defender," Deckard said, "and more, like, tough and helping the team out. Some of the girls, they've added me onto group chat, and it was my birthday a couple of days ago, and they were like 'Happy Birthday,' and they're always giving me compliments. It's like, so cute," she said with a laugh and smile.

Deckard is looking to accomplish much in her time with the Crusaders, and is looking ahead to the challenge.

"I hope that I gain some new skills and stuff," Deckard said, "and hopefully win a lot of games. The usual," she said, again with a laugh and smile.

Deckhard will always remember her time with Edwardsville as being very special with so many great memories with great teammates.

"It was really fun," Deckard said. "I'm going to miss them so much. We've had our ups and downs, but we were like a family."

Deckard is also hoping to be joined by teammate Quiana Johnson at Belmont Abbey.

"I hope Quiana's supposed to play," Deckard said, "so I hope she does come and play, because we've been playing since fifth grade, like when I started. And I really hope she

plays, because she's always been, like, reading my mind. She's been my motivation, she's been hitting my on my back, saying 'let's go.' And I'm like 'OK Quiana,'" she said with a laugh.