

Tigers Field Hockey Player Gabbi Trauernicht Signs With Belmont Abbey, Joins Teammate Deckhard On Crusaders

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EDWARDSVILLE -

Edwardsville senior field hockey defender Gabbi Trauernicht became the second Tiger player to sign a letter of intent with Belmont Abbey College in Belmont, North Carolina. Gabbi signed to play with the Crusaders starting in Fall 2021.

Trauernicht will be playing for head coach Meaghan Smiga and will be joining former teammate Abreya Deckard.

"Yes, it was definitely one of the reasons why I made this decision," Trauernicht said during a post-ceremony interview. "I already know someone who plays there, but it's the competitiveness of the team along with how welcomed I felt whenever I visited. The school is gorgeous and I feel like I fit in there academically, as well."

Trauernicht was impressed with the strong Science Department at Belmont as academics were also very important to her. Gabbi will minor in Environmental Science and major in Biology. Her interest in these fields made the choice to attend Belmont a good fit.

Tiger head coach Jaimee Phegley is very happy and excited that Trauernicht chose Belmont Abbey and feels she'll also be a good fit for the Crusaders.

"I'm so happy that Gabbi made her decision," Phegley said, "and that she's going to be heading out to North Carolina. I know she's going to love it out there. I'm extremely excited that she is going to be going Division-II. She had a lot of opportunities - a lot of offers. This will be the best fit for her and she'll have the opportunity to really shine."

The fact that Trauernicht will be playing alongside Deckard will be a big help to her, as well.

"Oh, definitely," Phegley said. "They were on the defensive line together for three years and so they're used to playing together and they know the coach there is very excited to see them and their dynamic together."

Trauernicht's intensity level will be a big part of her contributions to the Crusaders.

"Gabbi is consistently intense," Phegley said. "She never slows down, she's always ready to go and she's the perfect hype woman on the field. She's so good at getting her teammates ready and she's so confident. I know that she'll bring that to the field there. I know that she's going to be a good listener and learn from her teammates, but will also continuously strive to get better."

Trauernicht also strongly considered Ohio Wesleyan in Delaware, Ohio and it was on the top of her list for two years. Belmont Abbey only recently entered the race and her visit to Belmont clinched her decision.

"Belmont Abbey actually didn't come into mind until about two months ago," Trauernicht said. "I did a visit there and absolutely loved it. So I felt kind of bad leaving Ohio Wesleyan because they were definitely my number one choice."

Trauernicht also considered DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana and Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon, Wisc. She'll bring leadership and her skill set to the Crusaders.

"I'm being recruited for my leadership," Trauernicht said. "The coach basically told me that. I'm definitely bringing more leadership skills, but I also want to bring a different skill set. I feel like on the Edwardsville team, our team is very scrappy. We're not as clean-cut as other teams, but that helps us build better as a team, so maybe my style of field play would also be good."

Although the Tigers' season was canceled due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Trauernicht was able to bounce back well from the disappointment.

"For sure," Trauernicht said. "Since I've been in the recruiting process for so long, this season didn't have a huge impact on it, but I definitely had more time to build on my skill and use that in games against my own teammates."

The loss of her senior season definitely won't break Trauernicht's stride at all as the Tigers played intrasquad games against each other to make up for the loss of the season.

"Definitely," Phegley said. "Both Gabbi and Rachel Goebel, who signed with Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri earlier in the day, and a couple of other girls that are looking to play next year, they just did not slow down their search. They kept contacting their coaches and filmed some of the scrimmages that we held. The girls took it very seriously because they wanted to continue to play, so we did the best that we could to make it as real as possible."

It was still considered a successful season, even with the entire schedule being canceled.

"Definitely," Phegley said. "We actually played nine weeks with the scrimmages, and we would normally go 12 weeks, so we went almost an entire season. We went into that second week of October and treated it like it was practice. We had three practices a week with a scrimmage on Friday night, so we didn't let them think of it any less than if it was a real season."

Phegley is very confident of both Trauernicht's and Goebel's future success for their respective schools.

"I really think we're going to see them go from just being freshmen who are new on the team to being dominating forces on the teams that they are on," Phegley said. "I know they're both going to enjoy it and there's a lot that comes with playing a college sport. Both girls worried that because they're both great students that it would be too much, but they've been reassured by their coaches that they will be competing on great programs, and I know we're going to see both of them have successful four-year careers there."

Phegley is appreciative of the community's support of the field hockey program, as well.

"I just appreciate that there's been a lot of local support for us to continue to have our season as we did," Phegley said, "even though it wasn't like a true season. Our parents have been fantastic and I really appreciate that we're going to have a banquet on Monday to celebrate the season."

As far as a favorite memory with the Tigers, Trauernicht remembered a season-opening match that was postponed that turned into a team bonding experience.

"My favorite memory would be the Gateway tournaments; we have those every year," Trauernicht said, "but last year, one of our games got rained out so we went to Smoothie King. It was really fun because people were hanging out together and we were able to come together as more of a team right before the tournament."