

## Ava Goodin | Northwestern Soccer

Hi my name is Ava Gooden I'm at Northwestern University and I'm on the women's soccer team here The best advice I've gotten from my mentors and coaches is to continue to invest in those around me Um I've learned investing in myself is is very important and I especially um in that transition into college that initial journey to get here can feel very I would say individualistic at times where it's about you getting to this next level But once you get here and you're surrounded by people who are at the same level as you playing for a bigger purpose um I've learned trying to cast as many people under your net as possible um especially on this journey uh to hopefully reach a higher level for me um in terms of professional Um in terms of winning an NCAA championship all of those goals you're only going to accomplish them by bringing in people bringing people with you on this journey and that's something my coaches have continued to pound into me is it's very important to have big goals yourself but making sure you're bringing as many people on that circle as well Yeah for me it's just consistency and discipline um which can sound very broad But I've learned as a youth player and now bringing it to the college level that consistency is by far the most important thing where it's better to invest in yourself every single day even if it's just for 10 to 20 minutes at a time um rather than putting big blocks of time big chunks of time um at random times where they might seem bigger but um over time I feel like investing in in your self-consistency Consistently is going to be the best thing to reap results and see the improvement you want on and off the field Yeah I'm kind of in the same boat I think a lot of it is still consistency and discipline and making the small incremental choices that build up to big results over time So I really just try to do the small things well and stay consistent with things like my nutrition eating mostly clean whole foods um kind of following the 80/20 rule Or I'm not trying to uh completely overdo it and burn myself out with staying intensely attached to a certain regimen I guess but trying to make overall healthy good choices um for my lifestyle And like I said stay consistent with nutrition things like sleep um trying to move my body throughout the day even on recovery days like not pounding my body and doing a hard workout but trying to listen to how It's feeling and still trying to move it around and just doing um small things every day that will lead up to big results over time My biggest challenge I think to get here and something I still struggle with is most of the mental aspects when it comes to playing and competing at the

highest highest level um especially when I'm at the point I'm at now Um everyone works hard everyone does most of the small things right and the margins Between um being good and great gets smaller and smaller as you climb up that up that ladder Um so I'm at a point where I'm just trying to focus on my own journey and continuing like to do everything I can to be successful um try to bring as many people under that circle as well and lift others up and not get overly caught up in comparing my journey to other people's because everyone looks looks different in their process um has has different goals has different things that work work for them Um and I struggle with that mental aspect of comparison and am I doing enough Are they doing more than me Um so I'm at a point where I really try to focus on my individual journey um doing what's best for me whether that's doing more or less on on a given day Um and just I could continue to focus on building that mental muscle just like I would physically as well So yeah I may not have mentioned this earlier actually but I'm from Memphis Tennessee Um and coming coming from the south uh I was really caught up and I'm going somewhere close to home I'm going where it's warm where the weather is great um close to family just staying with what I was comfortable with Um but as my process went on um I remember Northwestern was a school I was honestly not the most interested in at first Obviously it's an amazing school but in terms of like distance from family and just being in a new place that I wasn't familiar with I Wasn't feeling a great pull at first but um once I like opened my mind more came on campus uh met the coaches interacted with the staff and the team and really got to see the full picture of what the school had to offer Um that was when I was like wow like thank God my dad made me email this school and go on campus because I would have missed out on such a great opportunity and probably would have missed going to the place where I feel like I was I was meant to be So I I was glad that um I learned to have an open mind throughout the process and be willing to try new experiences um even even if I may not have been open to to this at first So yeah I think for me in in my recruiting process uh I'm naturally not the most outgoing person Um I sometimes have to push myself in order to interact with others um just because I'm just naturally more reserved and and that's OK But I know in situations like when I'm being recruited it's going to benefit me and others the most If I put the effort in to interact and the others get to know me I'm an intern I'll get to know them and personality wise just really getting a feel for each school the staff the team um for me like culture was one of the top things um coming in into this

program because there are a lot of things that can change and be adjusted once you get to a program But um knowing the culture of what you're going into I think is arguably the most important and will not just be the determinant of success but also just your overall happiness on the field um just belonging into that teen culture So continuing to push yourself to interact with as many people as possible put yourself in uncomfortable situations where you're going to be talking to people who you may not know you may have to make that first hi I'm so and so Um but pushing yourself to have those uncomfortable interactions in your recruiting process and allowing others to get to know you And you going out of your way to get to know others as much as possible will I think benefit you a lot in the long run Well that answer changed a lot through my recruiting process and why do I want to play where do I want to play Um like I said at first Northwestern was not where I was naturally pulled to um just wanting to stay comfortable um by my home by my family Being worried that I wouldn't be able to recreate that feeling of home um in a in a new place But um like I said earlier like once coming to Northwestern and getting to experience um not just the facilities the the city and the and the students here but really getting a feel for the culture of the team the staff the coaches and just the overall athletic community here um Something that was essentially incomparable to any other school that I visited in my recruiting process And I never would have thought coming this far up north to Chicago it would feel like home but that was really the only way to put it is coming here on my official being here in person was the most at home I'd felt um out of all the places places I went to So I just think like the special quality of Northwestern being able to create that feeling of home especially from an academic standpoint that was very intimidating coming here Um I I am a good student but also just knowing like the reputation the school has and being unsure of whether I could handle that as a student athlete Um and the school has given me the security to know that um whatever my endeavors are um athletically academically that all of the support behind me to back it up and continue to cultivate that at home feeling over these these four years For me I kind of touched on this earlier Where at at this level the margin um between being a good and a great player it just continues to get smaller and smaller Um as you climb that ladder um of reaching a higher and higher level um and I'm at the point where just finding uh small things in my day to day routine and doing small things that add up to big results over time has proven to be the most um beneficial for me And I also said this earlier but that game of comparison

between you and the person next to you I think when you're in an athletic in an athletic environment as as a female specifically um competitiveness is so important and so essential to pushing yourself and those around you but I think as a female at times that competitiveness between women can turn can turn toxic and feel like it's me against her um especially in a team environment And I think continuing to work on that aspect of yes it's it's me against her but it's for a bigger purpose and we're doing me against her because we're working toward a bigger goal and an iron sharpens iron environment That's the way that me and her are going to reach those goals is by at times It may feel like me against her even though in the long run it's really me and her together trying to reach this bigger goal Yeah As a freshman coming in as the fall that was my biggest point of contention as being like wow like how am I going to continue to strive for such big athletic goals when now academically um there's arguably just as high of a standard I need to maintain Um honestly through the fall it was a lot of trial and error of just figuring out what worked especially um in terms of a time management schedule And I had to give and take at times with like my social life academics athletically at times things are going to give Um and I think being able to find times like the fall OK I know now I'm going to have to put more into my athletic and my academics and stuff like socially might have to take a bit of a hit And now that I'm in the winter um I can more try to add the social aspects back in But I think it's being able to acknowledge that it's impossible to put everything in in one basket And that's something I've learned the hard way is trying to do everything all at once and that can lead to just burn out feeling overwhelmed and up failing more overall in all those areas um rather than being able to I think to be mature enough to say no to things be like no I can't do this right now or You know this is going to have to take a hit for right now but I know in the future I can reinvest in this area of my life But um I think especially when you have big goals and do you want to reach um levels of playing professionally um reaching that big career that's in a really competitive environment I think it's being able to recognize that things are are going to have to give and it can be hard to make those choices In the moment but um I think when you like I said when you do have big goals um sacrifices are going to have to be made and it's being able to recognize when when things do need to be sacrificed So I think if I had to tell myself my younger self one piece of advice um I would tell her that yes the place you end up is so important but it's also what you make of that place and you can't rely on just the place giving everything you want Um I think

no matter where you are especially in the college environment I do feel like at Northwestern I am where I belong but I think there's also just so many good choices especially now in this current college environment where just women's athletics in general is so competitive and it's getting so well grounded in terms of like no it's not just this school that's the best Like there's so many good schools now which I don't think is a bad thing at all Um because like I said I don't think I think it gets really caught up into being like no I need to feel like this is the place on the moment I step on campus like this is where I belong And I think for me that feeling came over time where I made my decision to come here and I'm like this feels really right to me Um but it's only once I came here and really lived out the lifestyle of being a Northwestern student athlete um and really invested in my own experience and not just expected um everything to be handed to me and to be perfect as soon as I got here Um so like I said I think if I was talking to myself I would tell her Not to be so stressed about where I end up even though that is a monumental decision but I don't I often don't think there's one right answer I think there can be many right answers and it's more of what you make of those opportunities I'm Ava Gooden I go to Northwestern University I'm on the women's soccer team and you can check me out on Next Level Prep