

Lana Gibbs | USC Soccer

Hi I'm Lana Gibbs I attend the University of Southern California and I'm a goalkeeper on the women's soccer team The best piece of advice that I was ever given throughout probably my entire life and to kind of led into soccer as well was for my mom and she told me just write my story no matter what happens It's kind of unique because I don't think a lot of people get that but uh from a soccer standpoint it's kind of like all right You want to go in there and you want to have a shut out you wanna have all the clean saves you want to win the game and you just write that story and it kind of gets you into that mental aspect of like OK I have Maybe not all of the control but I have some control in the story that happens and how things plan out and so I guess in a way it's like manifesting how things are going but really just visualizing and repeating myself OK going to this game I want to win this game then let's win it I think my mom was always like that and not just in soccer but In life especially even in the college process from day one I was like I want to attend USC and I want to play soccer there and my mom was always saying OK then go out and do it go write that story So most important things I focus on in training aren't actually the physical aspects it's all in goalkeeping majority mental and I think a lot of people don't always understand that as the goalkeeper You make a mistake and it's a goal So a lot of training is you're getting scored on could be up to 50 times in a training depending on the day you hope not Um and so we work a lot on mainly distribution now I'd say the Style of goalkeeping and the actual play and our role on the field has changed a lot over the years so it's a lot of using the feet You really want to be the 11th field player honestly it's a lot of shot stopping I think at the collegiate level everything's bigger faster stronger and so everything that you know from before on technique that's absolutely going to carry you in but everything's faster and again just harping on the Mental aspect I think that's a huge thing off the field that we talk about and We have classroom sessions we have film sessions we spend more time off the field as a team than we do on the field just in meetings with coaches and even sports psychologists still have team bonding and really getting us all into the mental aspect as goalkeepers we're watching film for hours on end um we're kind of writing down our goals and with our team it's a very specific style of play and so You're learning as much as you would in an academic classroom but it's soccer and it's a sport Life is all about challenges and throughout my entire life I've faced Numerous uh it's funny I think soccer has been a

getaway for a lot of my life Um I grew up In a divorced household with my family and You know my dad he kind of struggled drinking a lot and my mom mentally wasn't always there and so my getaway was soccer and it was like OK no matter what happens in my house and what happens in the household as long as I can go on the soccer field and I can kind of get away for an hour or two then that's all I can really hope for And so growing up soccer was very Very peaceful and I still love it always to this day but it's different I think the college process was the very first real soccer challenge that I was like OK this isn't just how hard can you kick a ball it's overall as your character that is the college process that's about who you are as a person who as an athlete um and so when the college process came I think I was told by so many people that you know I'm from Boston Massachusetts so East Coast soccer is very different and the exposure to get out to California is it's just not there all the time and so one of the biggest challenges that I've faced in recent years was getting told that I just couldn't attend USC I couldn't even go with the division one level by coaches by Family members um my friends would never say that but other people that just strictly didn't know me you're always going to get put limitations on yourself and I think that was one of the biggest lessons that I've learned was that people are going to set those limits but in reality you set your own limits and in real reality there are no limits It's all up to you And so In soccer I'd say college process was massive challenge and then even my freshman year last year at USC was Definitely one of the most character-building years I've had in my life Um once again you're just thrown into an environment and right now we're the top 5 team in the country and so you're going from some little East Coast club that no one knows to all of a sudden The cameras are on the lights are on and you're being asked to do things that is basically like a job and as much as it It is difficult in aspects where people want a lot from you Our support system at USC is amazing um so less of a challenge and more of an amazing opportunity I feel like I'm always going into my college process because it was so unique once again and I was from a little small East Coast soccer club and my growing up I was even on a smaller club And so halfway through my Sophomore year of high school I switched and not a lot of people would know but I switched to a club called FT Stars and it was the top team on the East Coast and that was great However it was halfway through sophomore year and June 15th going into your junior year is when colleges can actually start reaching out to you and so I was pretty much 6 months away from The actual college process and I had little exposure so

from the age of Gosh now it's probably 12 years old The actual league it's called ECNL and they host events that like you'll get 100+ college coaches to every single one of your games It'll be multiple times a year And starting at the age of 12 they'll be attending they'll be writing your name down Yes they can't reach out to you directly but they can reach out to a coach And so I had joined this team where every single person had already known OK Colleges can't reach out directly but once they can I know exactly where I'm going to go and here I was like OK well I was just asked to join because the other goalie had a concussion and you need a goalkeeper And so it was amazing immediately jumping in and getting the exposure however June 15th came around and I had schools like UC Berkeley reach out and a couple on the East Coast Boston University Harvard which was amazing and you're like oh great like they're gonna offer me right away and that's just not how the college process works It's a lot of talking it's a lot of you're not the only one they're talking to and so you could get on the phone for an hour and a half with the college and you're never going to hear from them again Or you could send one random email and a couple of months later they'll finally respond And I think mentally that is the biggest part about the college process is knowing your worth and for me it was a lot of ups and downs of OK this college that I really want to attend no longer like that was a big thing with Berkeley was like I got on the phone with them They didn't reach back and no hate there Berkeley It's OK um whereas then you go into further research and for me USC was always the top school It was like that was the dream and honestly it made my college process harder because I every other school that I wanted to go to there was no other school It was it was just USC and so schools I would reach out I was like OK this is great but in the back of my mind it's always USC USC And so I eventually got in front of their goalie coach at the time Got her talking and she had the head coach Jane Aloconis come to my games and the assistant coach Amy Rodriguez at the time she's a former women's national team player came to a game and that was summer going into junior year I believe And then Saskia Webb was the goalie coach and then she left and so that quit my entire communication with them So then my junior high school season in the fall I had no contact with any colleges because again I was pretty much UC or bust And so By December of junior year I was really debating whether or not I actually wanted to play soccer in college and I knew I was good enough I knew I could do it but it's all about exposure I think that's the biggest thing especially in soccer is you need to get in front of them and I just did not have

that upbringing and the abilities and the connections at the time to get in front So January say late January of junior year USC was holding an ID camp And I was actually supposed to go to West Point ID camp that same weekend and I told my mom and love her to death because I was like I know you already paid for this but I really want to go to this USCID camp just to kind of throw it all out there and see where it takes me And so I attended the ID camp and I talked to the coaches after and the goalie coach then Cyrus who is now no longer here but he's the reason I'm At USC now um he talked to me and he was like I know I know your goalie coach and your goalie coach is Stan Gaspar and I was like how do you know And he's like just how you are And you know it was then I went back 3 days after I got a text from Jane Ellacona side coach and she was like Can you get on the phone We got on the phone I went on a visit 2 weeks later and I was offered 3 days after that So my college process is very unique and that it was very slow and very Doubtful at times and times where I wanted to quit and then all of a sudden things just work out and you get the exposure and you get in front of them and so I think that taught me a big lesson on a delay in life is not always a deny in life and what's meant to be will always be I think being in the college environment you learn a lot on and off the field from the moment you step into the locker room the first time and every day that you're there and one of the biggest lessons that I've learned doesn't even come really from soccer but it was when I attended my first day at preseason last year and for our women's soccer team we had 14 seniors And you hop in and they treat you like you're their child and all of a sudden you kind of take a step back and one of the greatest gifts I think of college sports is that your team becomes your family and the biggest lesson that I've learned so far is to really enjoy the people that you are around and to enjoy your teammates because the memories as much as winning a Big 10 Conference championship is one of the greatest memories of my life It is all the moments leading up to it where you're sitting around a bonfire with your team in the middle of a beach and you're looking around like how is this my life and how are these people around me and you're just really Enjoying it and you're enjoying the grind of soccer and you're enjoying Just life um with your teammates and I think that's one of the biggest lessons learned to take that step back Soccer will be a huge part of your life and really any sport and to really take that step back and it's not just soccer on the field but it's entirely a way of life and who you're around Advice to a goalkeeper will always be mentally that is the game It is especially at the collegiate level skill wise a lot of goalkeepers

you're right there and to separate yourself it's all about the mental It's all about staying calm emotionally it's being confident in yourself It's having the mental fortitude to get scored on a million times and to keep going And to keep that energy up especially most of the time we are the leaders on the field whether that's communication wise or overall just energy in the back and your team's gonna look at you and they need someone that is mentally strong and emotionally strong for them And that is the majority of goalkeeping advice I would give to younger athletes and especially to my younger self and I've told so many people this so many times because it's the best advice that I can ever give is to believe in yourself and don't listen to the outside noise If it's positive you can listen to it If it's negative though Everything that you need is within you and there are no limits that are going to hold you back other than yourself and if you believe that you can get somewhere whether that is mentally physically emotionally whoever you want to be you can become that person You strictly just have to believe in yourself Hi I'm Lana Gibbs I attend the University of Southern California and I'm a goalkeeper on the women's soccer team