

Kramer kicks her way into Marion record book

Written by Jim Ecker

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Kristin Kramer has been a goal-scoring machine since she joined the Marion High School soccer team last year as a junior.

She collected three more goals Monday in a 5-0 victory at Mount Vernon and smashed the school record for most goals in a career with 39.

She topped the old Marion High School mark of 37 goals, set by Jami Sunderman in 2003.

Kramer played varsity soccer at Xavier as a freshman and sophomore, then transferred to Marion to join relatives and friends there. She broke Marion's single-season record with 30 goals as a junior and has nine goals in just four games this year.

"Honestly, I really just go into each game with the mentality that I'm just going to do whatever I can to help my team," she said. "They made some great passes today and we really work well as a team. It's been a fun year."

Naomi Spence and Jasmine Grindeland also scored goals for Marion, which raised its record to 3-1. Ashley Kupka collected two assists while Lexi Rael and Ashley Iehl had one apiece. Tori Pratt made eight saves in goal.

Kramer, who stands 5-foot-6, led the Marion girls basketball team in scoring this season at 10.5 points and has been planning to play basketball in college, most likely at an NCAA Division II or NAIA school. However, her prowess in soccer has attracted the attention of University of Minnesota soccer coach Mikki Denney Wright, who plans to watch one of Kramer's games and has invited her for a visit.

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"That was kind of surprising," Kramer said.

Kramer said she's leaning toward basketball, but would consider soccer in the Big Ten at Minnesota.

"If that opportunity is there, it could be something I could do," she said. "I'm still pretty much keeping all my options open. I don't want to close the door on any one."

Kramer plans to take basketball visits to Morningside College and Southwest Minnesota State on Tuesday, just one day after becoming the most prolific scorer for Marion soccer.

Kramer began playing both sports when she was just 4 or 5 years old and quickly advanced to high levels, playing for the Heartland Soccer Club and the Cedar Rapids Panthers basketball program.

Kramer said she'll probably pick a college in early or mid-May. She'll pick basketball or soccer, but not both.

"I think I'm kind of leaning toward basketball, because that's always been my passion," she said. "I've played it a long time and it's something I really enjoy doing."

Kramer said she takes 600 to 700 shots a day on a basketball court, even during the soccer season. "It's always been my first love," she said.

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Marion High School soccer coach Becky Herman thinks Kramer could have a bright future kicking a ball in college. "I keep telling her she should play soccer," Herman said Monday.

"She's very talented, especially at the forward position," Herman said. "She can strike the ball pretty hard. The goalkeeper doesn't know she's going to shoot half the time. She's so quick.

"She definitely has a nose for the ball. Everybody on the team looks for her," Herman said. "They know something good will happen."

Marion 5, Mount Vernon 0

Goals -- Marion: Kristin Kramer 3, Naomi Spence, Jasmine Grindeland. Assists -- Marion: Ashley Kupka 2, Lexi Rael, Ashley Iehl.