

Forward brings 'different dimension'

By Christine Newby
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Freshman forward Hayley Brock isn't blood-related to her brother. Yet they share a natural ability and a passion — playing soccer. Hayley and her brother D.J. were both adopted to a family in

Acton, Mass. Now, they've both taken their skills to the collegiate level.

Hayley, just began her first year with the 12-time defending Ten Champion Penn State women's soccer team. While

**WOMEN'S
SOCCER**



Hayley Brock (7) chases the ball in a game against Virginia earlier this season. The freshman has impressed her coach and teammates.

Sarah Finnegan/Collegian

D.J. is a junior goalkeeper at Springfield College, a Division III school in Massachusetts.

D.J., 20, and Hayley, 18, developed their soccer repertoire by playing against each other as young kids.

"Oh yeah, all the time," Hayley said about working out with D.J. "We used to go to the field and I'd shoot on him all the time."

Hayley has tallied three goals and one assist, while recording 19 shots in 10 games played for the Nittany Lions.

Coach Erica Walsh immediately noticed Brock's talent and potential when she first scouted the Massachusetts native.

"I think it's fairly obvious what really stood out — her size, her strength, her tenacity," Walsh said.

"When she decides to go, I've not seen anything like it in the recruiting process when she decides to really work. We thought that she would just bring a different dimension."

Brock has the transition from high school to Division I soccer has overall been what she expected, but is a lot more challenging than anticipated.

"I think as a teammate [Hayley] has done exceptionally well,"

"I think it's fairly obvious what stood out — her size, her speed, her tenacity."

Erica Walsh
women's soccer coach

Walsh said. "She has kind of embraced any of the roles that we've given her. As a player, I think she's still coming into her own."

"I think she's got to figure out what all the rest of us see which is that she's as good as she wants to be. Once she figures that out, she can take over."

Senior forward Dani Toney also believes Brock's strengths lie in her 5-foot-9-inch physical presence, speed and strength.

"[Hayley] is a big girl and can hold players off which is really great because a lot of times when freshmen come in [they can't do that]," Toney said. "It's a different game because it's a lot more physical, especially in the Big Ten."

Playing the same position as Brock, the experienced forward takes it upon herself to help out the freshman.

"I remember when she came in on her recruiting visit," Toney said. "We were hanging out a little bit. She texted me a little bit this

summer just on little things like what she should bring or what she needs to do when she gets here."

Brock is not the only speedy freshman forward. Freshman Maya Hayes adds to the quickness in the lineup, alongside Toney.

According to Walsh, the forwards are developing chemistry.

"I think it can still be a whole lot better once they realize that they all need each other to be successful," Walsh said.

"Once they start feeding off of each other and getting excited with each other, I think we'll be in business."

Toney said the forwards work on building that team chemistry during practices.

"[By] playing with each other, running off of each other, and using our speed to our advantage as a group," Toney said on ways to improve working together. "It's been me running up top and now [Hayley and Maya] are here with me and we can all run together. It's fun."

End of streak lessens pressure on Lions

By Emily Kaplan

THEY said they didn't think about it. They didn't talk about it.

Heck, some players on the Penn State women's volleyball team didn't even know how long their record-breaking winning streak was.

"I don't think the girls could tell you the exact number," senior co-captain Blair Brown said shortly after the Nittany Lions lost to Stanford on Sept. 11 — their first defeat in nearly three years.

For the record, Blair, you and the Lions rattled off 109 consecutive wins.

But now that streak is over. And so is Penn State's stretch of 65 straight victories against Big

Ten opponents, thanks to a loss to Illinois last weekend.

And now — finally — the Lions can relax. They can regain a sense of normalcy.

"The Streak" — as it will be immortalized in NCAA volleyball record books — wasn't necessarily a good thing for this year's young team.

It created a massive target on the Lions' back, one that grew larger with every tight win over a Big Ten foe and easy sweep over a nonconference opponent.

It created a hostile environment every time Penn State would enter a gym.

Opposing fans heckled the Lions with chants denouncing their accomplishments and bread things like, "R.I.P. The Streak."

"The Streak" — as it will be immortalized in the NCAA volleyball record books — wasn't necessarily a good thing for this year's young team."

**WOMEN'S
VOLLEYBALL**



MY OPINION

It also created an unnecessary burden the team had to deal with. Instead of solely focusing on a younger, more inexperienced roster facing a grueling conference slate, the Lions were constantly pestered with hype over "The Streak."

And they hated it. Rightfully so. As coach Russ Rose would tell you — and he'd be blunt — "The Streak" was meaningless to the Lions, especially in their quest for an unprecedented fourth consecutive national championship this season.

But to everyone else, it was 109 definitive wins — a stretch that accounted for the second-longest winning streak in NCAA history and the longest by any women's team.

Now it's broken. And the Lions are stronger.

They don't have to deal with it all — the spotlight, the media, the expectations.

Penn State's program is comparable to the New York Yankees of the '50s, Green Bay Packers of the '60s, Montreal Canadiens of the '70s, Los Angeles Lakers of the '80s.

These teams raised the bar to such a high standard, and anything less than a championship is considered a disappointment.

After the Stanford match — when it was all over for the Lions — it was awkward.

Some players didn't want to talk, others gushed about how relieved they were.

The elephant left the room, the

target was removed from their backs.

For the last three seasons, there were certain expectations at every Penn State women's volleyball match. But now, the Lions seem even more determined to excel, to show they're still elite.

And even though they may lack some of the star power they relied on in years' past, don't count them out as contenders.

Because they have something that the last year's national championship squad didn't have — freedom from that cumbersome winning streak.

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