

Fox: Goalkeeper follows Steffen to UO

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"Just by coincidence, my coach was holding a goalkeeper tryout," she says. "They were doing a drill where you had to touch both posts, jump up and down, do a somersault and save a ball. I was eight or nine, and I thought it looked fun, so I asked him if I could try it. I ended up being good at it. Ever since then I've just kind of been placed in goal."

But she's been much more than just kind of good at it.

The sophomore from Orange, Calif., enjoyed a stellar prep career at Mater Dei High School. She starred as the top goalkeeper for the three-time South Coast League champion and was named to the All-South Coast League first team from 1994 to 1996. She was second-team All-Orange County as a junior and named the team's Most Valuable Player in 1995 and Player of the Year in 1994.

Coming out of high school, her first choice was to further her education and play soccer at North Carolina, the preeminent women's program in the nation.

"I was looked at as a player, but did not make it in academically to the school, being a very inner state school that they want to be," she says.

So how did a player who was looked at by a program such as North Carolina, with its lengthy championship tradition, end up at a program in its infancy?

Thank Oregon head coach Bill Steffen for that one.

"Mainly [because of] Bill Steffen," Fox says. "I've known him for, I think, six years now. I've been doing camps under him

Amanda Fox File



WHO:
Oregon goalkeeper
Amanda Fox

HOME-TOWN:
Orange, Calif.

STATS:
Leads the Pac-10 with 97 saves ... has recorded double-digits in saves three times ... recorded a career-high 14 saves Oct. 5 vs. Weber State ... has played 1,220 of 1,230 minutes this season.

since then."

The two developed a strong player-coach relationship during the various camps in Maine, North Carolina and California.

"After he found out that I didn't make it into [North Carolina]," she says, "he told me that he was going to try and get a job as a coach, and I was like 'OK, that sounds good.' I looked at a few other schools, then he told me he was coming here — and I came here."

She has been a fixture in the Oregon goal ever since, playing 1,694 out of a total 1,700 minutes last season and all but 10 minutes this season.

This year she has recorded two shutouts and has had three double-digit save efforts, including a career-high 14 against Weber State.

She has also bailed out the Ducks defense numerous times with spectacular, sometimes unbelievable, saves.

"She does things that you

don't think she's going to do," Steffen says. "She kind of saves our butt."

"There are plenty of goalkeepers that make the saves you expect, but the really good goalkeepers are the ones that make saves you don't expect. Amanda's done that for us."

The play Steffen remembers the most came during the Ducks' 3-1 loss at No. 3 Texas A&M. With the game tied 1-1, the Aggies attempted a penalty shot for the lead, which Fox denied.

"When we have a mistake, we're not always penalized for it as greatly as we could be because Amanda's there to pull us out," Steffen says.

Although the Ducks lost, Fox says that is one of her most memorable games.

She held her own against Texas A&M goalkeeper Melanie Wilson, who is widely regarded as one of the top goalkeepers in the nation, and put the Ducks in a position to pull off the major upset.

"After the game, the first person to come up to me was the Texas A&M coach, and he said, 'You made us work for them.' That made me feel like I'd finally reached one of the goals to be recognized as a goalkeeper."

Fox is very goal-oriented, setting the number of shutouts she wants to record and lowering the number of goals scored this season compared to last.

She also has one other major goal.

"I want to be the best goalkeeper in the Pac-10," she says.

Considering the first year and a half of her Oregon career, she could be well on her way.

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