

Henry joins Baker women's soccer team



Michelle Henry, a 2015 Louisburg High School graduate, is ready to give college soccer a try this fall as she signed with Baker University last semester.

Michelle Henry made her peace with leaving behind the sport she loved since she was a little girl.

Soccer was always a big part of her life, but she had just graduated high school and was ready to make school a priority. She enrolled at Pittsburg State and everything was in place for her collegiate future.

Or so she thought.

After a month on the Pitt State campus, Henry began to hear that sport begin to call back to her. It was a call she couldn't ignore.

"I really struggled with the decision on whether I wanted to play soccer or not," Henry said. "I went with Pitt because I just wanted to focus on academics and I didn't want soccer to conflict with my schooling. Once I got there, and after a couple months, I realized I missed soccer way too much. I wasn't ready to give up yet."

So as Henry looked into different possibilities, she didn't have to travel very far to find that perfect fit.

Henry got in contact with Baker University head coach Davy Phillips, a school she was originally considering out of high school. A few weeks later, the 2015 Louisburg High School graduate was officially a member of the Wildcat women's soccer program.

"I started to look into Baker and they were a really good school and soccer team," Henry said. "I reached out to the coach. I practiced with the girls and it went from there. After talking with their coach, he told me that school is first and soccer is second. He let me know that school is the most important and soccer is something you get to do while you are here and that is really what I was looking for. It was a perfect fit for me."

Henry transferred from Pitt at the end of her first semester and enrolled at Baker for the second semester early this year as she earned both an athletic and academic scholarship. Since that time, she has been taking part in offseason workouts with her future teammates and has found herself in a new role.

Normally playing in the midfield, the Baker coaches moved Henry to the forward spot – a position she has grown to like.

"(Phillips) likes those players up top to be his faster players," Henry said. "That is where I am at right now. I actually like it a lot. I am used to always dropping back all the time in the midifield to help defend, and when you are a forward you don't do that as much so it is taking some getting used to."

Playing in high school definitely prepared Henry for the college level as she competed on the boys soccer team, since the girls squad wasn't formed yet. The experience seemed to make Henry an even stronger player as she earned honorable mention all-Frontier League honors her senior season after garnering a starting position.

"I liked being able to start on the coed team, but it would

have been awesome to start on the first-ever girls soccer team," she said. "It is better late than never and I made it to quite a few games and it was fun to watch. I still felt like I was a little part of it.

"I think playing on the boys team made me a better player though. It is a different type of game because we are built different so it forced me to not let myself get pushed around. It helped me stand my ground and be quicker."

Henry hopes to take that attitude into the first day of practice with her new Baker teammates as they prepare for the upcoming fall season.

"There are a lot of good girls out there," Henry said. "I have been working hard all summer because I have been out of soccer for a year and they haven't, so I am having to keep up and get to a level where I can compete for a starting position or be contributing. I just want to go play."