

Knipp signs with Ottawa University-Arizona for soccer



Louisburg High School senior Herman Knipp signed his letter of intent on March 10 to play soccer for Ottawa University-Arizona, a new school that is opening in Surprise, Ariz. Sitting next to him are his parents Herman and Susan Knipp. Standing (from left) is Louisburg soccer assistant Michael Pickman and head coach Kyle Conley.

Once his high school season ended in early November, Herman Knipp thought he was done with soccer.

The Louisburg High School senior was ready to focus on getting a degree in engineering, but then he got a message from an old club coach and everything changed. He presented Knipp with an opportunity he couldn't pass up.

His former U12 coach, Matt Gow, was recently named as the head coach for Ottawa University-Arizona, a brand new college based in Surprise, Ariz. Gow offered him a spot and Knipp accepted a chance to play for his former coach.

Knipp made it official on March 10 when he signed his letter of intent to play for Ottawa and he is ready for a chance to make his mark with a new program.

"It is incredible," Knipp said. "You don't really get the chance to start something at the collegiate level. A chance

like that just doesn't come because all these programs and colleges have been established for so long. I am excited about it. Obviously it is going to be a little rough the first couple of years because we are starting from scratch, but I am looking forward to it."

The new campus will be located across the street from where the Kansas City Royals have spring training and the Ottawa school will feature 19 athletic teams as it looks to grow in the coming years.



Knipp is excited to be a part of it and earn his engineering degree at the same time.

"Ottawa changed the schedule around to make it easier on the athletes," Knipp said. "I found a way to make athletics and

academics combine into one and just having the opportunity to play in college and it is not one many people get. I can't take this for granted and can't wait to move to Arizona."

Being a part of a first-year program intrigued Knipp, and despite being a long way from home, he is looking forward to joining the Spirit team. The coaches have mentioned to Knipp about possibly playing the forward position – the same one he played in high school – or he could play in the midfield.

Knipp earned honorable mention all-Frontier League honors in his senior season after he scored 10 goals and recorded three assists as he helped the Wildcats to a fourth-place state finish in Class 4-1A – the best finish in school history.

"He has every one on a blank slate because we are all technically freshman to him. Honestly, I want to start if that is possible, but I am just going to give everything I have and do my best when I get down there. Everyone is fighting for those 11 spots."

Along with trying to find his way with a new team and school, Knipp will have to adjust to a new community – one that is several hours away from home.

"It is going to be tough," Knipp said. "I can't be like, 'Hey mom, can I come home for dinner tonight?' It is an 18-hour drive straight-through. It will be a major life change that is for sure, but I am excited for it."