

Student Stories: Seeking balance between volleyball, food science

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UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. -- Maggie Harding has been watching Penn State volleyball [1] since she was 5 years old, never dreaming that playing the sport herself in a fifth-grade gym class would lead to a spot on the very team she idolized.

As a freshman in 2010, Harding was a preferred walk-on with the Penn State women's volleyball team, which is renowned for having won four consecutive National Collegiate Athletic Association titles in the past five years. She was present for the most recent championship in 2010.

As a sophomore majoring in Food Science [2], Harding was named Academic All-Big Ten with a 4.0 grade point average in the fall of 2011. "I take school very seriously," she said. "It's nice to be recognized for having good grades and being a part of an amazing team."

It's a stiff challenge to achieve the right balance between academics and varsity athletics, Harding noted. She decided on her major after years of watching the Food Network and after a teacher had given a lesson on making bread.

"I loved the connection between food and science," Harding said. "I looked for a college with a good volleyball program and food science program. I picked Penn State because it is one of the top food science schools in the country and has a great volleyball program. I got the best of both worlds and never looked back."

This past fall, the team's final record was 25-8, despite the loss of six seniors. There were only two seniors on this year's team, and they graduated in the spring.

"We have to carry on the Penn State program -- the priority was to stay on track as much as we could. It was a good season, but we didn't fulfill our full potential. We're working hard for the coming fall."

Some former Penn State volleyball standouts play the sport professionally in

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Europe after graduation, but right now Harding is considering graduate school. She plans to explore different aspects of her major but knows she wants to have a job in food science, possibly in product development.

Her future involvement in volleyball may be to coach young girls in the sport. Harding currently helps coach at summer camps and at a local club.

For more information about the Food Science major, click here [3].

Links:

[1] <http://www.gopsusports.com/sports/w-volley/psu-w-volley-body.html>

[2] <http://foodscience.psu.edu/>

[3] <http://agsci.psu.edu/students/academics/majors/food-science>

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