



Interview with Becca Kotula and Eamon McGlaughlin

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As the 2024 season approaches, our Social Media Intern, Riley McCracken, Wilson High School class of '24, sat down and interviewed Reading United's RUAC's WPSL captain, Rebecca Kotula (2023 CSC Academic All-American East Stroudsburg University) and Eamon McClaughlin (2023 D2 CCA South Region First Team, Lee University).



Q: Why do you want to play for Reading United?

Rebecca Kotula: I wanted to try out for Reading United last year because it was the only women's team in Berks County, which has been my hometown for my whole life. I had personal connections with [WPSL Asst. Coaches] Amanda and Rachel, because they were my coaches in high school at Wyomissing, and I've known Tommy [WPSL Head Coach] since I was tiny. With the homey feel of the entire organization, I knew it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. I wanted to be part of something in my hometown because this is the place where I started playing soccer and fell in love with the game. With the team being in its inaugural year, I knew I would have a part in solidifying its foundation and establishing its culture. That's something special, and I wanted to be part of it.

Eamon Mclaughlin: I wanted to be a part of Reading because of the long-term success and history of the club. It has been known as one of the best in USL2 for a long time. I know past players who have played at Reading in the summer during their college careers and have gone on to do big things. I knew there was no place better to be in the spotlight, getting good training, and returning to college ready for the season.

Q: What is your favorite memory from the 2023 season?

Rebecca Kotula: Last season was one of the most fun seasons I've ever had playing soccer. My teammates became my best friends and we got so close over the time we spent together. We traveled some distance to play Torch FC in the second half of the season. Some of my teammates and I took the team van and as we were driving to the game, we came up behind one of our girls, Caroline (we call her Tom)[Drexel University] and just followed her for the drive honking back and forth to each other. We were already all in such a good mood and got ready for the game. Unfortunately, we went down pretty early from this amazing run by the opponent. We went into halftime down by one and I remember being really frustrated. All Tommy told us was to relax, laugh for a minute, and just play soccer. He was so chill during the talk and I had no idea why. He told us at halftime he knew we were going to win. He was confident in us, we would find a way. I got out of my head and trusted the girls I was playing with, knowing we would at least give 110% for the rest of the game. We came out electric in the second half and got a free kick right outside the box out wide. I stood over it and noticed a major gap in their defense. I zipped this ball across the 18 on the ground to the back post, where Becca Delp [Kutztown University] read my thought and played it back across the face where Gabby Kurtas [The College of William & Mary] had a tap in goal for the equalizer. Maybe us having the same name put us on the same wavelength!! We knew we had tired them out and had the momentum, so we kept on pushing for the game-winner. Torch had a corner and I was playing up top, so I signaled to Emme (goalkeeper) [Emme Woelfel, Kutztown University] if she got it, we go fast

Eamon Mclaughlin: There were so many memories made all summer but if I had to list my favorite memory of last season it was when Shuma [Shuma Sasaski, 2023 MSC Second-Team All-Conference, University of the Cumberland] scored a rocket to tie the game at home to Ocean City. (Shuma Scores Late Equalizer) Outside of soccer, it had to be living with the guys in the housing provided at Alvernia. We had a great group and I have maintained strong friendships since.

on the counter. She makes a great save and immediately plays it out to Gabby who is easily one of the fastest and most dynamic players I've ever met, who starts bolting down the field. She plays a perfect through ball and I'm past the backline. It's now just me and the keeper, who is charging out to me. I got clipped in a battle with her earlier in the game so I knew this one was going my way. I put the ball past her and it was like slow-motion watching the ball roll into the goal. When it did, we all started cheering so much and I sprinted back down the field to celebrate with Emme and Gabby and everyone. We left the game with a 2-1 win and then we got Dairy Queen blizzards to celebrate!! It was one of the best moments of the whole season. Oh also, literally any moment when Abby Frew 2023 USC All-Region IV Second Tea, Penn State Harrisburg] and I are together is my favorite moment of the season. She is the weirdest and funniest person I have ever met...when we are together, watch out world.

Q: What made you start playing soccer?

Rebecca Kotula: My older sister Steph played soccer her whole life and I just always looked up to her. I wanted to be with her all the time, so I learned soccer to be with her even more. As I started playing with her in the yard, I started to enjoy playing by myself. Turns out, I was pretty good at it! I played for the Wyomissing Soccer Club and just fell in love with it the more I played. My parents always supported me throughout my entire journey. My dad spent Saturdays in the yard teaching me how to shoot the ball, make accurate passes, and use my body to be physical. My mom always made time to bring me to games and tournaments and was my biggest supporter.

Eamon Mclaughlin: I started playing at 3 years old and have loved it ever since. Growing up in Ireland soccer is just something that every young boy does at some point.

Q: Is there any advice you would give to other people who want to play for Reading United?

Rebecca Kotula: My biggest piece of advice is to be confident in yourself and your abilities. At the end of the day, life is so much bigger than just soccer or a summer league team. It's about the memories you make, the people you meet, and the lessons you learn. You won't remember how many minutes you played each game or the shots you missed, but you will remember your teammates and the moments like pregame dances, halftime problem-solving, goal celebrations, and practice giggles. Meet new people and take the opportunity to learn something every day you play. It's such a blessing to be healthy and able to compete with other talented girls, it's never something to take for granted. Be confident and just play freely, that's the best way to show coaches what you're capable of, and having a good coachable personality can make a difference as well. At the end of the day, just have fun!!!

Eamon McLaughlin: I would say to attend the tryouts and show the best of yourself or reach out to the coaches if it's something you are interested in. It's a great place to spend your summer and focus on soccer if you want to improve.

Q: Who is someone that inspires your career?

Rebecca Kotula: My family is my biggest inspiration. My parents work so hard in their jobs, but still always make time to come to my games, college, and summer league. They are my biggest supporters and critics, pushing me to get better and better each game. My sisters live across the country, but they constantly watch my live streams and text me about my games. My boyfriend played on the men's team at ESU, and we have become each other's biggest supporters in our careers. We constantly push each other to get better but are still the first to cheer for each other during games. I have such a strong support system from my family, and I would not be the player I am today without them and their love and support.

Eamon McLaughlin: I don't look up to any pro players for inspiration but my favorite is Roy Keane. But the person who inspires me and drives me to do well is my mom whom I want to do proud.

Q: Any final thoughts?

Rebecca Kotula: My faith is the most important thing in my life. I am so grateful to have a body that stays healthy and allows me to compete at such a high level. God has given me a gift, and I strive to use that gift to be a good teammate, person, and disciple. At the end of the day, my life is so much more than soccer and my performance each day. This blessing has allowed me to play happier and freer than I ever had before. More than winning and getting results, I love my teammates and the time we get to spend playing the sport we love. I am so thankful for Reading United for allowing me to captain the team and be as involved as I was last year.

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