



PERFORMANCE GOALKEEPING

GOALKEEPING SIMPLIFIED

PGK Newsletter October 2009

Issue 7: Q&A with Karina LeBlanc, Canadian National Team Goalkeeper.

What was the biggest transition from college soccer to the professional game and International game?

The game is more sophisticated and quicker than at the college level. I think the college level definitely helps prepares you for it but it is just a whole different level.

What has been the highlight and low point of your career so far?

I think the toughest thing for me was getting hurt a couple days before the World Cup in 2007. It was one of our last training sessions and we were playing next goal wins and I was the number 1 keeper. I felt the best I had ever felt, confidence was where I should be going into a big event like that and I felt on top of the world. In that second it happened I don't think I ever had felt so much pain in my life but it was physical and emotional because I knew deep down it wasn't going to be ok in time. I tried telling myself every moment of every day for the next couple days that God was going to heal me but he had other plans for me. We did well as a team nevertheless.

I think I've had a couple highlights with the Olympics and 3 World Cups but I think playing professionally daily in the best league in the world is amazing to me.

You are one of the players that have played in the WUSA and now the WPS, how important is the new league for women's soccer?

I think the new league is important for the women's game because it brings back the best of the best into one league. Every day I am getting better because I am playing with or against players who challenge me. It is also important for the younger

kids because now they can dream dreams that are a reality. For me I truly am living out my dreams daily.

What is a typical game day routine for you? What is a typical training day routine for you?

We train in the morning at 10:15 so usually I try to be in the locker room for treatment or film by 9:00. We train for about 2 hours and depending on the day we will do a pool workout, which incorporates our weight lifting or film. Some days in the evening I will go for bike rides just to get something extra in or watch some more soccer on the TV. What some people fail to notice that as players watching games at the highest level is also training because we are training our tactical understanding of the game. I watch and analyze other goalkeepers and learn from them.

What's the best advice you've received?

The first thing that comes to mind is that to never train safe. In that I mean pushing your limits and trying new things will always help you in being a better goalkeeper. For example as a keeper if you are doing crosses and you know your range, in practices challenge yourself to try to go for balls you wouldn't usually go after. In the end you will extend your range and have more confidence in the box.

How long do you like to warm up on game days, and briefly what is your routine?

My warm up generally takes about 35 minutes. The most important part though before I enter the field is my visualization where I have my headphones on listening to my favorite music and seeing myself playing and being successful on the field that day. Once the goalkeepers are permitted to go on the



PERFORMANCE GOALKEEPING

GOALKEEPING SIMPLIFIED

field I got out there and I warm up by getting my entire body warm with dynamic stretching paired with some sprints, high knees, butt kicks etc. I then do handling, some diving (low, medium and high balls), crosses, some kicking and in the end take some shots and crosses from the team. I do enough where my every bit of my game feels ready. I then go into the locker room and visualize one last time before I enter the field.

What was some of the most important training you had as a youth player (what helped most in your development)?

I think it was knowledgeable training. I was fortunate enough to be on the full national team from when I was like 17/18 years old. I think that experience helped me to see my dream right in front of me every day. I was training at the highest level but also receiving the elite goalkeeper training. I know everyone does not have access to that but if you have a knowledgeable goalkeeper coach in the area go to him or her as often as you can. It made the biggest difference to me.

How has goalkeeping changed throughout your career and how do you see it continuing to change?

The position has become more sophisticated. There are several aspects of the position: the mental side, the Physical side, the Tactical side and the Technical side. Earlier in my career I don't think we focused on all the aspects as much or in as much detail; today, there is an emphasis on all. We no longer are responsible for just catching the ball but being that 11th field player as well. To be honest I enjoy it but it does require much more work.

At the time of this interview you have not conceded a goal in the WPS, what do you put this down to and does it add pressure on you?

Well I've given up 2 goals in one game but I'm back on my streak so....

No it doesn't add pressure because that is what goalkeepers set as their goals before every game. I cannot control everything that happens on the field but as a gk you want to do well with what you can control. I think my consistency comes from my experience and that helps in reading the game, communicating the right information to my teammates so that they are in the best positions, that way many dangerous shots do not get off, and really the team in front of me playing well as a unit. I do not think shutouts are a reflection of just the goalkeeper but the entire team.



What advice would you give young female goalkeepers who aspire to play at the collegiate and professional levels?

I would say be willing to work harder than everyone else. When I was growing up I would do a little bit extra every training session. Whether it is footwork or crosses or watching film, we willing to do that extra bit because that is what gives you confidence. As a goalkeeper you have to have the confidence in yourself that you can stop anything or else your team won't have that confidence in you. I had that confidence because I knew that I had done all that I could to prepare for the big moments. Have belief in yourself and your ability and most of the times you will get it done. Remember though, you cannot control everything that happens.



PERFORMANCE GOALKEEPING

GOALKEEPING SIMPLIFIED

What advice would you give coaches on developing young female goalkeepers?

I would say to coaches to make sure they have researched what they are teaching. I have seen so many keepers that are athletic and have so much potential but their bad habits kill them. I would also say that to be careful what they are yelling at their keeper. Again so many times I see coaches yelling at a keeper something they have never been taught. Goalkeeper training is so vital and important to a keeper for his/her confidence but also for their understanding of the game. It is such a delicate position that you want to do as much as you can to ensure they have the confidence you want them to have.

Performance Goalkeeping would like to thank Karina and wish her all the best in the future both on and off the field. To follow Karina's successes go to www.karinaleblanc.com

