

News Release

Daml Overcomes Obstacles to Forge Path from Alaska to UMN Crookston and Beyond

By Shawn Smith on Wednesday, October 28, 2020

When most people think of the North Pole, they of course conjure up images of a jolly fat man named Santa Claus, reindeer, and elves. For Lindsey Daml, North Pole, in Alaska that is, is home. In reality, Daml's North Pole is nestled near the great Alaskan wilderness close to the Tanana River and just two hours from the majestic Denali National Park and Mount McKinley.

Daml came from North Pole, Alaska over 2,700 miles south to Crookston, Minn. It has sometimes been a rocky road for the Golden Eagle soccer player, as she has battled through injuries her entire career. Just when she thought she was healthy to return, COVID-19 hit and canceled her fall season. It was to be her final season, a season in which she built herself up from injury in order to play. Despite the pitfalls and rocky terrain, Daml has taken an outstanding perspective on her journey at UMN Crookston as she prepares to obtain a degree in natural resources from the University of Minnesota, and prepare herself for her next journey, whether that includes soccer or not.

Daml's road to UMN Crookston began like it remained throughout. It was filled with surprises. As she prepared for her first visit to the Red River Valley, she ran into a roadblock in the form of flight issues.

"My flight ended up getting delayed and diverted so I got stuck in Anchorage, Alaska for a whole day," Daml recalled. "I landed in Fargo an hour before the game I was supposed to watch started. Somehow we made it in time and watched the game. That was the game against St. Cloud State, where they had to either win or tie in order to go to conference playoffs. So overall, it was kind of a bummer. The girls weren't super excited because they lost. I ended up liking the area. I liked the small school aspect. It was like, okay it is a Division II school, I can get a scholarship and I can play soccer. It was so perfect. I came to UMN Crookston that fall."

It was a struggle even before that for Daml to try to get recruited. It isn't easy to get noticed being from Alaska, but Daml and her parents did anything they could to get in front of college coaches. Eventually, it was former Golden Eagle Head Coach Joe Alianiello that would reach out to Daml and open up her path to UMN Crookston.

"I got on to a recruiting website for the NCSA," Daml said. "First off, I didn't get a lot of help getting recruited. Not a lot of people from North Pole, Alaska go on to play college sports. My parents would send me out of state. I did a tournament in Las Vegas to try to get exposure and kind of learn the ropes. I kind of went from there. I started emailing schools. I guess I didn't have a particular preference on where I went to school. I knew I was going to have to leave the state. That is one thing that I have always known. And then I emailed Coach Joe (Alianiello), and he was the first person to say 'hey, we will fly you down, come for a tour, we are interested.' I capitalized on the experience."

Daml started out her career at Minnesota Crookston in the fall of 2016 feeling healthy and ready to go. But her next roadblock began during her freshman season when she rolled her ankle during a co-ed game.

"I was nursing my ankle injury and I was already anxious to come in to play," Daml said regarding her first collegiate injury. "I said to myself, 'I will tough it out. It will be fine. It is just a sprained ankle, whatever.' I was doing pretty well and then towards the end of the season I realized my ankle was not right. I finally went to the doctor and it ended up that my ligaments were really stretched out and I had a bone chip. I had to make the decision if I wanted to wait and get surgery after my sophomore season or if I wanted to get it immediately. I decided to get it immediately. I didn't want to do more damage to do it. That was tough, but it was helpful because I had enough time to recover and make it back for my sophomore season."

Daml was driven to return healthy was what Coach Alianiello told her during her first game playing soccer for the Golden Eagles.

"My first game I was starting as a freshman, I think Joe could tell I was extremely nervous," Daml stated. "I remember he came up to me and pulled me aside and said, 'if you weren't good enough, you wouldn't be playing.' Every time I have been injured that is one thing that has stuck with me. If I wasn't good enough and it wasn't worth it, why would I waste my time to rehab and come back?"

Another main connection that helped Daml through it all was the connection with her teammates. Especially the relationship she formed with three freshmen that arrived at UMN Crookston at the same time, Olivia Puttin, Jacqueline Burke, and Paige Pettit.

"Traditionally over all my seasons at Minnesota Crookston we have had ups and downs," Daml said. "Having them (Olivia, Paige, and Jacqueline) through the experience has made it worth it. I think that is what I will miss the most from playing soccer at Minnesota Crookston. I obviously love the soccer aspect, but the memories we have created and the memories we have to make yet, those are so worth the entire experience."

Unfortunately Daml suffered another major injury later in her career as she had to undergo hip surgery. This injury was especially tough as she knew it would impact her senior season and would lead to a decision where she wouldn't be able to finish her career with her friends who she had been through so much with.

"The hardest injury was my hip surgery because I knew I wasn't going to be able to finish my senior season, especially with the core four group of us that I came in with," Daml stated. "That is one thing that was tough. I tried to stay positive and I was going to sit that season out and come back and I wanted to be healthy for my last season."

Daml chose to redshirt the 2019 season and come back healthy for the Golden Eagles. She was excited and ready to go for her senior season, but then another wrench was thrown into her plans. This time it came in the form of COVID-19.

"Through the ups and downs, no matter what, if I think about that what-ifs, what if I would have played the last season when I could have last year?," Daml pondered. "In the end, it was a good experience and I wouldn't change it."

Daml has tried to make the most whatever has been thrown her way. Despite not playing in 2019, Daml still tried to do whatever she could to help the team. She knew that she couldn't play, but with a first-year head coach in Kyle Halfpop, she knew that she could provide aid in other ways.

"I definitely tried to up my leadership role for the team," Daml said. "I stepped up and said 'hey we need to all match and do this.' I think that worked out well, that way Kyle could focus on coaching. Especially because he didn't have an assistant coach. I wouldn't say I moved into an assistant coach position, but I tried to help out with the side stuff as much as possible. Especially because I didn't travel because I had class on Friday. I decided to stay back and not travel. As much as I could I made sure the locker room was organized or just different ways in which I could step up."

Daml has also made the most through her academic experience. A natural resources major, she has had a great experience under all of the professors in the natural resources department, especially with her advisor John Loegering, and Phil Baird.

"My advisor John Loegering has really helped me and so has Phil Baird," Daml said. "All of the professors in the natural resources program are phenomenal. I feel like they all have vested interest in us. They all want to know about what we are doing to prepare ourselves for the future. They all like that I am from Alaska, so I feel like that gives me an upper hand a little bit. I think Phil and John for sure have helped me to get to where I am. I switched my major late, so I was kind of behind. They really took me in to get me caught up to all of my peers that are graduating at the same time as I am."

Daml also had the chance to pursue a fellowship opportunity with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and experience that allowed her to pursue her passion last summer in Alaska. It also could help set up her future as through the experience she has been provided a direct hire authority opportunity where she could pursue a job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is a decision weighing on her mind, as he ponders whether to pursue her future in natural resources now, or play one more season of soccer at another university. Daml would also be able to pursue her master's degree at another university.

"I am on the fence right now," Daml said regarding her next step. "Do I go get my master's degree or do I jump into a career with the government? That is one thing I am going to have to think about."

Daml has loved the experience she has received at UMN Crookston. She has found a small family, whether it is in her natural resources program or the soccer program.

"I definitely feel like it is a family," Daml said about UMN Crookston. "Campus is small and I feel like every time I walk on campus I know someone is going to say hi to me and I will say hi to someone. It feels good to know that people want you to be here and they essentially accept you and you accept everyone else. It is one big family. I am a natural resource major, and I feel like I get along with all of the natural resources students, along with all of the student-athletes. It is all a big connection circle and everyone wants to see you succeed."

Despite a winding road from the beautiful wilderness of Alaska, and a career faced with challenges at UMN Crookston, Daml has made the most of it. It is a shame that we didn't get to see her final season play out at Minnesota Crookston, but no matter what she decides she is set up for a great future because of the relationships formed and a great education pursued from the University of Minnesota. She will look back at her UMN Crookston experience fondly and is excited to see the success set Coach Halfpop and the Golden Eagles can have moving forward.

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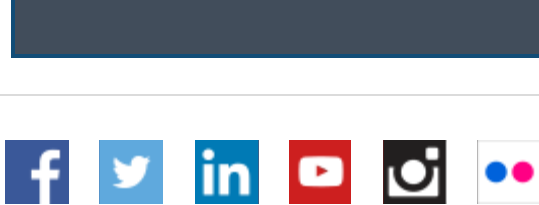
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