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Around the Columns

Soccer standout snags Big 12 honor

As a new soccer recruit, Alysha Bonnicks arrived at Mizzou thinking that she wouldn't even get to play.

Instead, the freshman from North Gower, Ontario, wrapped up a record-breaking season by packing her bags with awards: Big 12 Conference Rookie of the Year, a berth on the Top Drawer Soccer All-Rookie first team, and selection as a finalist for the Soccer Buzz National Freshman of the Year award.

"I didn't expect to make an impact on the team," says Bonnicks, whose conference-topping 10 assists helped her become the first Mizzou soccer player ever to win any Big 12 recognition. Bonnicks set Mizzou freshman records for goals (11) and assists as part of a 13-win squad that tied for third place in the Big 12. This ties with the team's third-place finish in 1999.

The psychology major has been collecting awards since high school, when she was a standout in both soccer and cross country. "I used to be good at running," says Bonnicks, who holds high school records in the 200, 400, 800 and 1,500 meters.

Eventually, the seasons overlapped, so she had to pick one. "I would choose soccer over track every day," she says. Why abandon cross country? After placing first in nearly every competition she entered, Bonnicks felt the weight of high expectations. Soccer teammates share the pressure, she explains. "Soccer teams have to work together."



In her first season at Mizzou, Alysha Bonnicks snapped up awards including Big 12 Conference Rookie of the Year. Photo courtesy of MU Athletics

Bonnick, who credits the team's family-like closeness with helping her fend off homesickness, started itching to practice again just a few weeks after the fall season ended. "Next year's going to be amazing."

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