

**PLAYER SPOTLIGHT:
LILY NAYAR (Fusion SC)
MEMBER OF THE TONKA FUSION ELITE 2005 TEAM**

Lily was asked by her coaches to record a journal of sorts about her experience at the Olympic Development Program Midwest ID Camp in Michigan, July 12-16, 2018.

The 4-day residential ODP Midwest ID Camp is a unique opportunity for invited players to train and compete with the top players in the Midwest and be trained by high level licensed coaches, including exposure to college coaches for the next level. Players also had the opportunity to be identified for future ODP Midwest events. During the 4-day camp, Lily and other players were exposed to some very high-level trainings and sessions with national touted Region II Olympic Development Program staff. The ODP Regional II coaching staff are some of the top high-level licensed coaches, including college coaches, within the Midwest Region.

As with many regional camps and events, many times players get the opportunity and experience of a long bus ride, and that is where Lily's journal begins.

Bus Ride:

On the morning of July 11th, we left on a bus packed with players from the 01, 02, 03, 04, and 05 age groups. Even though I knew some Fusion kids on the bus, it was a good opportunity to meet some new players. I met and sat next to an 04 player that plays club soccer for MTA. We talked for a little bit telling each other about ourselves, but spent most of the bus ride relaxing and listening to some older and much louder players. Annabelle and I found ways to pass the time on the long trip with our phones and some relaxing.

When we arrived at Saginaw Valley State University, in Saginaw, MI, I was happy to find out how nice the facilities, dorms, and most importantly the food selection was. I had the opportunity to room with two other girls, one from Iowa (Maclayne) and one from a club in Wisconsin named KASA (Emily). Both were great and made the living experience a positive one.

Thursday:

The first session we took part in gave all the players a good opportunity to get set and get a feel for the level of play, which I was very impressed by. There were some really amazing players there. At the first session the coaches put us into teams of 4 and we competed in a 4v4 winner take all tournaments. My teammates and I were on team Uruguay.

For Tonka Fusion, I normally play in back, so naturally I gravitated toward this spot in the 4v4 diamond, but due to limited positions, I ended up playing out wide for the tournament. As it worked out we won the 4v4 tournament and it was a great way to start the camp experience. The coach that worked most closely with us was Coach Anton, a Russian goalie coach. The one thing that I took away from the first session was that all the girls were very technical and combined their skills with speed and pace.

Friday:

On Friday, we took part in a functional training session which was specific to our positions. We spent the warm up getting mentally ready and defended at a 50% rate. The coach described how each and every player at camp plays a ton of soccer and gets physical repetitions again and again, which was important, but he emphasized the importance of mental focus heading into training sessions as well as games. After the warm up we did an activity where the forward would check the ball, the ball would be played in and then the player who received the ball would have to find a way to attack the defender 1v1. This activity transitioned into a 2v1. The defensive focus of the drill focused on our positions, as defenders, to not over commit and attempt to turn a 2v1 into a 1v1 to gain advantage in similar situations. Near the end of the session, the drill turned into a more free-flowing attacking game and we finished with some fun activities where all players rotated through attacking roles.

Along with on field sessions, the camp also provided some valuable classroom sessions. A lot of the discussion in the classroom focused on off-field topics, such as leadership values and setting important goals as we transition in the ages of college recruiting and playing at higher levels. A lot of the off-field activities focused on themes, for example bravery. One activity had us in groups of 3, with players we had never met before. Our task was to think of 11 brave women to put into roles on a soccer team. For example, we chose Michelle Obama as our coach because of her strength and leadership.

Our second session on Friday focused on playing out of the back, a topic that my summer TFE team has focused on heavily, to prepare for some of the high nationally ranked teams we play against in MRL and Regional tournaments. The session was led by an ODP coach from Ohio South, named Eason. He told us how he was from the Caribbean and it was great to hear a soccer coach perspective from someone from a different region of the world. I learned that the state of Ohio is split into two halves to accommodate the big amount of high level leagues, teams, and metro areas that are huge soccer hubs. The challenging part of the session was when we were forced to make decisions with the ball at our feet quickly and under pressure.

Saturday:

On Saturday, we finally got to play a 11v11 game, which was something I was looking forward to. We played against the 2004 team and the pace was crazy fast. We actually came away with a 5-3 victory and I felt really good about how I played. I played right back and enjoyed it. Our team was very strong in the attacking third, so I didn't get too much pressure as a defender. It gave me a great opportunity to play with and watch some very talented players from all over the region.

After the game we had another classroom session that focused heavily on nutrition. It was filled with good discussion and information about how we should handle our habits relating to nutrition and how it can affect us when put into higher level playing situations.

In the same classroom session, we spent time talking about social media and being responsible digital citizens. We have heard a lot of the same messages at school and within our club teams, but it was good to hear the reinforcement related to our soccer lives as well. We did a group activity and brainstormed ideas of what was right and wrong to post about when we are on social media.

Our second field session on Saturday was filled with a more technical warm up of volleys and one touch passing. After the warm up we did an activity that contained three channels of play. The two outermost channels were attempting to connect passes to each other and the defensive players in the middle were working on defensive shape and movement. It was very similar to a drill that my TFE team coach Lawrence has us do from time to time, so I felt good about the objective and outcomes of the drills. I

liked how the coach kept adding small details to the drill to make it more game-like.

Sunday:

I really enjoyed the first session on Sunday. They let us have some competitive fun and played a street soccer tournament. We ended up playing the tournament on some tennis courts. It was session filled with variety, which I thought was fun. My team tied most of our games and lost a few. I played mostly in defensive roles. I thought my decisions were quick and accurate and I was able to connect passes. Again, the speed and technical ability of the players around me were cool to be a part of.

Our second session of the day had the players divided into two teams again. This session was led by an English coach named Chris. This session was my first opportunity to play in the holding mid position, which is another position I get to play with my TFE team. One of my main defensive roles in this position was to not let their attacking midfield players turn with ease with the ball at their feet. I really liked this session as I felt like I was a good fit for the role. Also, the feedback from the coach was very helpful.

Monday:

Our final day of camp was filled with 11 v 11 matches again. We kept our team together from the first day of 11 v 11 matches, which I liked. In the games that day, I played more holding mid, but also played outside back as well. In the first game, we played against a very athletic team, so the speed of play adjustments were very important. This game was filled with pressure packed situations and the decisions had to be fast and accurate or else the other team would make us pay with scoring opportunities.

We closed camp with a closing ceremonies. The closing ceremonies included awards for all the small tournaments in the past several days, awards for things like favorite coach. We even had some fun challenges that the coaches got in on, including a dance competition. I cannot remember who won the Taylor Swift Shake it Off contest, but it was a lot of fun.

Overall, this experience was one that I will not forget for a long time I was given the opportunity to play soccer with a lot of great players and in front of a lot of high level coaches. I was able to add some really awesome tools to my play and saw a lot of value being a part of the experience.

Lily Nayar