

Grover reflects on futsal championship goal

Written by Darren Steinke

Kirsten Grover will never forget her golden moment.

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Three years ago in the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference women's futsal championship contest, Grover netted the game's only goal to deliver the Medicine Hat College Rattlers to a 1-0 victory over the Mount Royal University Cougars in Lloydminster.

"It is one of my favourite ones in my entire soccer career, just because I am not a goal scorer," said Grover. "I am usually not in the spotlight.

"I play in the back, and I kind of get the job done. That is my role.

"That goal was huge for me. Not only was it the winning goal for that game. It's one of the only goals I have ever scored in futsal."

Now a fifth-year defender, Grover, who stands 5-foot-7, is playing out her final futsal tournaments as a member of the Rattlers. The outdoor soccer season ended in late October, when the Rattlers lost both of their games as the host squad of the ACAC championship tournament.

The 22-year-old remembers the details of her goal in the 2011 futsal title game like it just happened.

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“I was kind of near the top of the key, and Shaleigh (Pirie) kind of gave me a little wall pass,” said Grover. “I basically toe punted it in.

“It went bottom left corner, so I don’t think the goalie really expected it.”

Mentioning a name of a former teammate also brings the realization about how much time has passed. That futsal title game was the last match Pirie played as a member of the Rattlers.

“I know my first year when it came around I knew I was going to be here for five years,” said Grover. “I was thinking like I was really appreciating the time I had with the team, but I was like, oh, I have another four years.

“Before I knew it, I was in my fifth year. I was like I only have a couple of games left of outdoor, and I only have futsal season and that is it.

“Then you start thinking about real life starting, and not seeing all the girls. There is a feeling of sadness, but I wouldn’t change anything about the five years that I played.”

While Grover is part of a core group of five players in their fifth year of eligibility, there are also nine players in either their first or second years of eligibility.

“It is interesting, because you try to tell them you have to appreciate this time,” said Grover. “They’ve never had the experiences that a lot of the fifth years have had, which is losing in really tight games that we’ve worked all year for.

“I think to them, it is a new feeling, and it is a new thing. I know for us fifth years it is just hard sometimes to see first years come in and not understand fully the importance of some really important games.”

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Rattlers head coach Jim Loughlin also said Grover's championship winning goal will be a moment he will never forget. He also enjoyed working with his personable and hard working defender, who had a big focus on keeping her fitness level first rate.

"It happened early on in the game, and we basically hung on against a very strong Mount Royal team the rest of the game," said Loughlin. "You are always going to remember the first time the team you are coaching wins a championship."

When September comes around, Grover plans to apply to join the Medicine Hat Police Service having gone through Medicine Hat College's police and security program. Her father Stu is a retired RCMP officer.

No matter where life takes her, Grover will always remember her championship goal and the emotions she felt after that game.

"It is a huge sigh of relief before it was happiness, because it was so nerve-racking that it almost wasn't even fun," said Grover. "There was so much on the line, and everyone was so worked up."

"I think everyone was just so relieved that game was finally over, and then we celebrated after. It was just happiness guaranteed for the next six months."