

Story written by Dallas Finn, a reporter for The Bend Bulletin on Audrey Tehan, 89' Girls ODP player.

BY: Dallas Finn
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Audrey Tehan likes to take it one dream at a time.

Tehan, 15, a sophomore at Sisters High School, has her heart set on playing for the University of Portland women's soccer team. That's not to say she doesn't think about post-college play.

"I think it's every girl's dream to be on an Olympic team," says Tehan, a sweeper for the Sisters squad. "I just want to play college soccer and when I'm in college, I'll see what I want to do with it."

This weekend, Tehan will be zeroing in on a more immediate goal -- to earn a place on an Olympic Development Program soccer team, which will help get her noticed by college coaches and, she hopes, secure a college-roster spot. Tehan will try out for the ODP at Gresham High School Dec. 4-5. Multiple ODP tryouts are scheduled over the next two weeks in the Portland area, according to Erik Lyslo, ODP coordinator for Oregon Youth Soccer Association.

Tehan was a member of the program last year, but she says she doesn't consider herself a lock to make it this season.

"They look at everyone like they're looking at them for the first time," Tehan says. "I just kind of play it by ear. I'd like to make it to the regional team or national team, but right now, I'm focused on making it on the team again."

The "team" actually refers to one of several squads that make up the Oregon ODP, Lyslo says. The program was started in 1977, according to SoccerNova.com, as a way to designate up-and-coming players who could eventually represent the U.S. in national and international play.

According to Lyslo, players selected for ODP are separated into five age groups. There are 25 players in each group. Teams play in a variety of tournaments across the U.S.

After the main ODP season, which runs from January through the spring, 18 players per pool are selected to attend a regional ODP camp. From there, coaches select an "all-regional team," Lyslo says. Beyond that, Lyslo says, players can be selected for national teams.

"That's where you're getting pretty serious," Lyslo says. "If you're getting up there, you're getting close and the national coaches know who you are."

Only a handful of Central Oregonian teens are in, or being considered for, the ODP. Tehan was the only Central Oregon female to make the team last year, Lyslo says. Trying out this year is Kelsey Testerman of Bend. On the boys side, participants include Tanner Robertson of Redmond and, from Bend, Jordan Anzaldo, Clinton Cranston, Andy Hackbarth, Zackary Madison, Casey McCool, Connor Mitchell, Geovanni Oretega, Drew Williams and Zackary Ybarra.

Lyslo says that Central Oregon players make up approximately 12 percent of the Oregon ODP, with Tehan and Testerman accounting for about 3 percent of the girls' program. Tehan's induction into the program last year helped broaden its reach, Lyslo says.

"It was great because basically, she was one of a few players from out of (Portland) who made that team," Lyslo says. "A lot of people think ODP is a Portland thing, but it's a numbers thing. There's so many people over here."

According to the OYSA, 96 percent of women's national-team members worked their way up through the ODP ranks, while 95 percent of men's team did the same. ODP teams expose participants to the highest level of competition possible, Lyslo says, as well as to national and college coaches.

"You can't play against any better competition than you will in the ODP program," Lyslo says. "If you're interested in playing soccer beyond high school, it's definitely the place to be."

Tehan knew that a few years ago, when she decided to try to make the team to further her competitive experience and broaden her exposure to the sport she's played since she was 5. An active club and school player in the Sisters area, Tehan says she knew getting into ODP would help her pursue her dream of making a college team.

Before her eighth-grade year, Tehan tried out for the program but didn't make it. She says the experience was an eye-opener.

"It's the most rigorous thing I've been in," Tehan recalls. "The first day, I came out with so many bruises and I was so sore I could barely walk on my feet. It was really mentally challenging and physically demanding."

She spent the next year working on the areas in which the program's selectors -- OYSA coaches -- indicated she needed improvement, and she earned a spot in the program as a freshman at Sisters High.

"The first year, I hadn't had as much experience," Tehan says. "I didn't have as much knowledge of the game. I basically had to work harder."

Tehan, who also runs track for Sisters High -- she finished fifth in the 800 meters at the district championships last spring -- was selected to attend the regional ODP camp last season, but she had to skip it due to a stress fracture in her left ankle. This year, refreshed and recuperated, she's set her sights on making the regional squad and taking all she can from the experience.

"It's a big privilege to be able to play on it," Tehan says. "There's so many opportunities that come from it. You get a better knowledge of the game. It's also very competitive. It's the most competition I've ever had. It's a different level of play."

Lyslo says Tehan is more than up to the challenge.

"She's a great ballplayer," Lyslo says. "The coaches have nothing but good things to say about her. She was one of the better players on (her) team last year."

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